

Theological Education

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ISSUE FOCUS

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Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be emailed to the managing editor at brown@ats.edu. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by at least two of the following board members, who make recommendations to the editors regarding their publication.

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Editor's Introduction

Stephen R. Graham

Theological Education supports the mission of The Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting by "providing those concerned with theological education with scholarly discourse and reports on issues and trends, research findings and resources, and models of critical analysis and effective practices in graduate theological education." Some issues report on projects guided by ATS that provide important insights for leaders in theological schools. Recent examples include the project on Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation and the most recent issue on Master of Divinity Curriculum Revision. Upcoming issues of this type include reports on the Theological Schools and the Church project (fall 2008), the work on Faculty Vocation and Governance (spring 2009), and Women in Leadership in Theological Schools (fall 2009). There are also issues planned that will present material related to the upcoming revision of the ATS Standards of Accreditation (spring and fall 2010). Sometimes these issues also include "Open Forum" articles on a variety of topics submitted by scholars from ATS schools and beyond. These articles may or may not "fit" the theme of the issue but are regarded as having their own value for the readers of the journal.

This issue includes an assortment of such articles that we have grouped together as "Issues in Theological Education."

Timothy Lincoln challenges the leaders of theological schools to think about the often debated, always controversial subject of outcomes assessment from the theological perspective of stewardship. In his helpful essay, "Stewardship in Education: A World-Bridging Concept," he argues that there is great potential benefit for the theological school community through dialogue with the broader higher education community.

Two of the articles were first given as presentations at the Lilly Conference on Theological Education, an event designed to nurture the scholarly vocations of theological educators. In his presentation, "Who is it for? The Publics of Theological Education," Efrain Agosto identifies the various "publics" served by theological educators and, against those who would denigrate scholarship done from a perspective of faith, argues for the academic validity and integrity of distinctively *theological* research. As Agosto puts it, "Theology and faith do not predetermine historical and theological reflection, but they do motivate them, and so do the publics we serve as theologians and theological researchers." Carl R. Holladay outlines the path to "Crafting Theological Research." He urges scholars to engage in explicitly *theological* research and to devote "sustained energy, lively imaginations, and moral courage" to the task in the face of resistance from those with an antitheological bias revealed in many forms and in unexpected places.

Fernando A. Cascante-Gómez offers a model for multicultural development within theological institutions based on his experience of the process at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Educa-

tion in Richmond, Virginia. The school was deeply invested in the process; the model was tested by a group of faculty, students, and staff; and there was immediate impact.

In "Theoretical Perspectives on Integrative Learning," Sarah Birmingham Drummond addresses the recurring theme in theological education of integrative learning. She argues against a form of Docetism in education that values the abstract over the concrete, the disembodied over the enfleshed, and explores the impact of "engaged" theology—to use a term from Nicholas Wolterstorff. Drummond argues for reflective practical education at the *center* of the theological curriculum rather than relegated to add-on or afterthought status. A particular form of "engaged" theology is the subject of the essay "Young Evangelical Church Planters" by Hutz Hertzberg and Francis Lonsway. The authors investigate the characteristics of young evangelical church planters and compare that group with a sample of graduates from a set of evangelical seminaries. With a number of denominations becoming involved in church planting and a number of schools being asked to prepare candidates for church planting, this essay and the studies upon which it is based come at an opportune time.

Continuing the ongoing discussion about varieties of distance education, Meri MacLeod shares the story of a "Distance Hybrid Master of Divinity: A Course Blended Program Developed by Western Theological Seminary." Seeking to accentuate the best of both educational worlds, face-to-face and technologically connected, MacLeod describes the process of the program's development and shares lessons learned from the seven-year project. The process at Western gives evidence of careful planning, effective procedures, and an appropriate focus on the *most* important goal, student learning. Not only is their distance learning program effective, but the positive influences of new learning are being felt throughout the school as well.

Returning to the theme of diversity, "Theological Education in a Multicultural Environment" distinguishes between simple statistical diversity and "normative diversity." The authors studied Fuller Theological Seminary, statistically a very diverse community, whose racial/ethnic representation is significantly higher than the norm for ATS schools. Identifying institutional structures and cultures that often *dis*-empower certain groups of people, the study uses the concept of "racial microaggression" to argue that empowerment requires recognizing and acknowledging both intentional and unintentional acts that leave some students feeling disempowered. The result is a series of recommendations that can be of value in many institutions. Fuller and Union-PSCE are to be commended for giving us this honest access into their communities.

Finally, Stephen Bevans weaves together systematic theology and mission in an innovative approach to teaching the course, "DB 4100: The God of Jesus Christ—A Case Study for a Missional Systematic Theology." The course emerged within a curriculum revision process and bridges the divide between traditional systematic theology categories and the course, which itself became "a missionary act."

With its unusual breadth of topics, this issue has something for nearly everyone. We are pleased to be able to offer this rich collection of essays from the wisdom of the ATS community of schools.

Stewardship in Education: A World-Bridging Concept

Timothy D. Lincoln

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: Although seminaries assess processes and outcomes of their educational programs, there is little dialogue about assessment between the worlds of theological education and the broader higher education community. The author argues that the concept of stewardship has resonance in both theological and secular contexts and provides a world-bridging framework that enhances the understanding of educational assessment. Using the notion of stewardship, the author argues that assessment per se does not commodify theological learning and provides examples of assessment that are consistent with a stewardship perspective.

[Author's Note: I wish to acknowledge the comments that I received from anonymous readers of the first draft of this article. These comments materially improved the final product. Nonetheless, all opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and may or may not coincide with the opinions of my colleagues, peers, or superiors.]

Historically, theological seminaries have seldom employed systematic assessment measures, in part because of theologically rooted suspicions.¹ At the same time, seminaries are accredited by regional or professional bodies that require evidence of institutional effectiveness and assessment. Seminaries maintain accreditation because they value it as a sign of their institutional goodness.² In valuing accreditation, seminaries keep company with thousands of other higher educational organizations and engage in institutional isomorphism, the sociologist's term for "keeping up with the Joneses."³ Theological schools engage in assessment activities, I suspect, with a combination of resignation, suspicion, and zest. Many deans and presidents are resigned to the task because it is imposed by accrediting agencies. Many faculty members are suspicious, and the odd duck institutional researcher at a seminary may think that assessment is a genuinely meritorious idea.

Theological education's dialogue with the higher education community

Yet, there is minimal dialogue about assessment between theological educators and others involved in higher education, as evidenced by searches of *Education Index Retrospective* and *ERIC*. Articles dealing with assessment in theological education have been published primarily in journals whose audience is composed of seminary leaders, such as this one. Two other key institutions concerned with the improvement of theological education, Auburn Theological Seminary and the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in

Theology and Religion, both facilitate conversations among leaders whose schools are members of ATS. A study by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching titled *Educating Clergy*⁴ is part of the foundation's ongoing work in assessing the quality of professional education and stands as the key recent counterexample of outsider interest in the processes and outcomes of seminary education. In my view, theological educators stand to gain by being part of a broader conversation about the purposes, processes, and outcomes of graduate education.

In this paper, I argue that the suspicions of theological educators about assessment are overblown and, moreover, have been articulated by other observers of higher education. I will summarize the arguments of those who resist assessment later in this paper. For now, let me pass along two comments from faculty members that provide a glimpse of the frustration about assessment. A faculty colleague recently told me that most of what goes on at our school is ineffable, so it cannot be assessed. Another professor worried out loud that if we begin to assess student learning, eventually we will only be allowed to teach things that can be assessed.⁵

The body of this paper consists of three parts. First, I describe stewardship theory as it has developed in management literature and argue that its values are especially pertinent to those involved in higher education. Second, I show how this secular stewardship theory has significant parallels with values endorsed by the Christian tradition. Finally, I argue that viewing educational leadership as stewardship provides a firm grounding for the use of assessment practices and, consequently, that theological schools may remain faithful to their religious values while employing quantitative or qualitative means of assessment. One purpose of this paper is to construct an argument in such a way that it is understandable to both theological educators and secular higher education leaders, thus promoting a broader conversation between the two communities about educational leadership and assessment. To be sure, theological schools that wish to maintain their status as accredited will engage in forms of assessment regardless of whether the faculty and administration share a common understanding of why this work is being done. But I am attempting to build a case for conducting assessment whose primary rhetorical appeal is not just to following a set of rules imposed from the outside. To put it another way, I am attempting to persuade the resigned and the suspicious.

Stewardship theory

Stewardship theory versus agency theory

Stewardship theory of management developed in the literature of economics and business ethics as a way to account for managerial behavior that was not adequately explained by agency theory.⁶ In agency theory, all persons in a firm are assumed to act to achieve maximum personal profit.⁷ Consequently, in a business there will be conflicts between actions of agents (managers) and the interests of the principals (owners) because each seeks to maximize individual gain. The behavior of Enron executives who committed crimes and lied to the board is a recent egregious example of how managers did not act in the interest

of the principals but rather devised complex financial schemes to make money for themselves.⁸ Because of the agency problem, principals devise mechanisms such as outside audits to keep tabs on managers. These agency costs are tolerated because it is assumed that they are unavoidable, given selfish human nature. In their seminal article, Jensen and Meckling argued that the agency problem “exists in all organizations” including universities.⁹ In the world of higher education, the agency problem manifests itself as the tension faculty members feel between the academic work they do in pursuit of tenure (and recognition from their guild) and other responsibilities such as committee work.¹⁰

Even before the work of Jensen and Meckling in the 1980s, other organizational theorists had argued that human motivations are more complex than agency theory admits.¹¹ In practice, workers derive satisfaction from a job well done or their personal relationships with colleagues, independent of compensation. Stewardship theory takes these subtle, nonutilitarian human motivations into account. In stewardship theory, a manager is a steward whose behavior is consistent with goals of the firm.¹² Stewards believe that pursuing organizational ends is the best way to meet their personal needs. These personal needs include compensation, to be sure, but also such intangibles as the need to grow as a person,¹³ the wish to achieve, and the desire to belong. In contrast to agency theory, stewardship theory presumes that an individual is worthy of trust and, therefore, will use power to achieve organizational ends. Principals can tell good stewards from bad by their results. “A steward . . . maximizes shareholders’ wealth through firm performance, because, by so doing, the steward’s utility functions are maximized.”¹⁴ The steward is not selfless but is motivated by complex forces. As a result of the interplay of these forces, the steward identifies with and furthers the organization’s aims.¹⁵

Stewardship theory and higher education

The stewardship perspective is consistent with the aims of higher education. Unlike capitalistic firms, colleges and universities do not exist to turn a profit. They are one example of a “commercial donative nonprofit” organization¹⁶ that receives some money from clients but derives the bulk of its income from donors. Groups who believe in the value of education—states, the federal government, and private donors—fund most of the costs.¹⁷ This systemic altruism in higher education is rooted in an ethical commitment: education is a community good. “Our core purpose,” asserts Lawrence Faulkner, president of the University of Texas at Austin, “is to transform lives for the benefit of society.”¹⁸ For this university president, higher education is a social good. Leaders of all higher education institutions serve as stewards. They use income from various sources to promote learning and research, the values of which are not judged primarily by a balance sheet. In fact, empirical studies document that educational leaders consistently seek to enhance educational quality and extend their influence by acquiring and spending all available money rather than turning a profit.¹⁹ Research indicates that employees of nonprofit enterprises often choose to work for these organizations, despite receiving lower salaries, because of ideological commitment to the goals of a specific organization.²⁰ Despite the media attention given to the compensation

of presidents and some superstar faculty at elite private colleges and research universities, few would seriously argue that higher education is an especially lucrative field of endeavor. Fewer still would argue that the big money is in theological schools. Thus, understanding leadership as stewardship is consistent with the history and practices of higher education.

Stewardship as a Christian value

Current uses of the idea of stewardship have their roots in twentieth century Protestant Christianity, especially as a way of talking about the use of money and land.²¹ In Christian terms, stewardship means that believers exercise authority over possessions, land, or animals on behalf of God, the true owner of everything. Stewards recognize that they have a trust from God and therefore seek to act in ways consistent with their understandings of what God intends for the world. Thus, stewardship conceptually stands in contrast to the view that nature can be ruthlessly exploited for short-term gain. The historical record indicates that, in practice, the behavior of Christians may not be in accordance with this ethical value. The Christian tradition accounts for such failures as instances of the sin, finitude, and tragedy that beset human endeavor. Kantonin extended the concept of stewardship as responsible action to encompass “all of life’s orders: home, citizenship, business and industry . . . and education.”²² Thus, stewardship does not describe one part of what Christians do in response to God; stewardship encompasses the whole. The prudent use of possessions is both mandated by God and, as Luke Timothy Johnson put it, is an embodied symbol of a faithful response to God.²³

For John Douglas Hall as well, stewardship “is an inclusive concept”²⁴ that encompasses being and doing. Hall contends that humans exist along with nature, not above it. “Stewardship seeks to establish that which God also sought and seeks, in great humility, to establish: the peace, abundance, and glory of the creation.”²⁵ Stewards, by definition, are accountable and responsible to God. Because stewardship encompasses the entire life of a Christian, it is applicable to behavior on and off the job. In the context of the workplace, Senske insists that a Christian leading a nonprofit organization must take care to “demonstrate that good intentions translate into results, and to provide objective data to support those results.”²⁶ As understood by late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century Christian thinkers, then, stewardship is the contention that Christians are responsible and accountable to God in all of life. Because they align themselves with God’s intention for creation, moreover, Christians will seek to act in ways that nurture rather than exploit. Especially in the Reformed tradition, discipleship (a synonym for a Christian’s response to God’s grace) entails learning as stewardship of one’s mind and gives a theological grounding to the Presbyterian record of concern for higher education in the United States. The trope of the steward resonates with rich theological substance.

The convergence of secular and Christian stewardship

The secular theory of stewardship and the Christian view of believers as stewards share important similarities that are pertinent for this discussion of assessment in higher education. In both cases, first of all, the steward acts responsibly on behalf of another. In the secular theory, the steward acts for a set of principals (owners of a firm) or stakeholders (regents or trustees). In the Christian view, the steward acts ultimately as God's agent. Second, both views assume that the steward is committed to something more than his or her private financial gain. Indeed, the environmental movement in America invoked stewardship as the rationale to preserve natural resources in the face of profit-related exploitation.²⁷ Third, both theories contend that human motivations are more complex than rational economic theorists conceptually admit, although Christians appeal to theologically grounded views (e.g., consistent response of gratitude to a loving God) rather than to psychology (e.g., the employee's desire to be part of a successful company) or empirical study to explain the complexity. Finally, both views of stewardship assume that there are ways of determining whether one is a good steward. There is a quantifiable dimension to stewardship. Because of these three convergences, theological educators and the higher education community in general can use stewardship as a conceptual framework for leadership and assessment. The concept of stewardship provides common ground for fruitful discussion and learning from one another. I am not arguing that the theological concept of stewardship is identical to the secular notion developed in the management literature, nor am I arguing that Christians should surrender to the *Zeitgeist du jour* and drain all notions of accountability to God from their stewardship talk. My contention is that persons of faith and secular educators can have meaningful conversations when they talk together about how to work as stewards in educational organizations.

Stewardship and the fear of assessment

The aptness of assessment

Accrediting agencies require planning, data collection, and coherent explanations for institutional actions through mechanisms of institutional effectiveness, quality enhancement plans, and ongoing program assessment.²⁸ Political leaders in the states and at the federal level also demand that higher educators give an accounting of the relationship between fiscal appropriations and student learning.²⁹ Such mechanisms, it might be argued, are inconsistent with a stewardship perspective. If stewards are trustworthy, such oversight is a needless expense.³⁰ Educators might argue that they know how to educate; legislators and donors should simply provide the resources for schools to employ ethically and prudently for teaching, research, and service. In the seminary context, professors might tell the dean that they are subject experts in their own specialties, so all is well. Stewards, however, by definition do not choose the mission of their organization, neither do they create the ground rules. Stewards are not ultimately in charge; they serve others. Therefore, a requirement of reporting per se is not inconsistent with a stewardship perspec-

tive. Stewards in higher education should be eager to demonstrate the fruitfulness of their efforts precisely because they share the values of their respective organizations and identify with them.

Does assessment commodify theological learning?

In my view, assessment per se is not at odds with a vision of higher education leadership as stewardship. In the context of theological education, Smith has voiced a subtler fear about assessment programs. Some seminary educators fear that assessment tries “to measure and commodify learning”³¹ and thus “idolizes pragmatism.”³² Because of the fragile nature of knowledge about holy things, this line of reasoning goes, it is pointless to apply quantitative approaches to the enterprise of teaching and learning in seminaries. Such concerns are not unique to persons who affirm explicitly religious commitments. Bill Readings argues that universities have left behind passion for culture in the face of market pressures.³³ Scholars such as Sheila Slaughter and Larry Leslie have documented how research universities have compensated for cuts in direct government subsidies by rewarding research close to the market—capable of being turned into products for consumers.³⁴ Mark Schwehn argues cogently that the modern research university’s deafness to truth and human flourishing is rooted in commitment to Max Weber’s vision of the academic enterprise as primarily involving the creation of new knowledge. Such a technical enterprise logically results in undervaluing teaching and forming students into persons. The research university honors faculty productivity primarily if not exclusively as technical publication.³⁵ Through a parallel line of reasoning, Readings takes the argument one step further, concluding that the contemporary university cares only for a positive balance sheet of utterly vapid excellence. The fear of the commodification of learning, in the view of both Readings and Schwehn, is serious because of the demonstrable power of forces in government and private industry that construe higher education’s value primarily as either a private good (education is the gateway to better paying jobs) or an engine for economic development (leading universities, for instance, to gauge their success by the number of patents awarded).

Such fundamentally economic construals of higher education are at odds with what theological education values. Ministerial formation, a significant objective in seminaries, involves development of character as well as the acquisition of new knowledge and professional skills.³⁶ Different Christian traditions have distinctive views on what ministers or priests should do and be.³⁷ Reporting on psychological or spiritual transformation seems elusive at best, because human transformation cannot adequately be understood solely by a series of numerical measures, no matter how exhaustively the instrument is validated and normed. The project of theological education is premised on providing leadership for religious communities, not generating economic growth or high incomes for graduates. In this respect, theological education as ministerial training explicitly rejects Weber’s scrupulous focus on making knowledge by also embracing concern for the character of human persons.

The proper role of accountability

Concerns about measurement as commodification point to the difficulty of assessing higher education's intangible goods. Yet, affirming a stewardship view of education does not thereby excuse the steward from accountability or assessment. The intangible is not also utterly invisible. Rather, the steward will ask what methods of educational measurement are consistent with a school's distinctive values and mission. I here suggest two examples, one quantitative and one qualitative. First, a seminary whose mission is to train persons to enter the ordained ministry of a given denomination might logically report the number of graduates who take ministerial positions or the number of new congregations begun by its graduates. Such rudimentary quantitative measures are consistent with a stewardship perspective because the measures document how leaders have employed resources to accomplish the school's mission. The rationale for measuring these outcomes is rooted in a desired linkage between formation for ministerial practice and observable results. The president of a seminary who tells external constituents, "Our graduates plant churches" should be able, with numerical precision, to answer the question, "How many new congregations did they start in the past five years?"

Second, a seminary might choose to use the qualitative measure of a student portfolio to document learning.³⁸ Such a portfolio, modeled on an artist's portfolio, might include sample sermons, reflection papers, and counseling verbatims written by seminarians. The portfolio documents the abilities of the student as they are demonstrated through significant work products. Portfolios may be judged by faculty members for assessment purposes and may help graduates showcase their capabilities to congregations. In order to serve assessment purposes, the examples of student work contained in the portfolio must be linked to the stated outcomes of a school's degree program. For instance, if a school states that MDiv graduates will be competent preachers, it is logical to include a sermon or sermons in the portfolio and to conduct assessment on these sermons in order to provide feedback to the faculty about the specific abilities of students.³⁹ To provide another example, if a school expects that MDiv graduates will write clearly, the portfolio might contain examples of the sort of writing that a pastor does (e.g., an article for a congregational newsletter).

The higher education steward's concern is to *measure things that matter*, that is, things that are valuable to a specific seminary's mission and particular religious values. The Christian steward, of course, also affirms that such measures are consistent with God's purposes. Without such measures, stewards will be in the dark about the quality of their work. Stewards should want tangible evidence (as indirect or tentative as it might be) to demonstrate the fruitfulness of their work. As McCarthy put it, theological school leaders want to discover "how and in what form might questions be framed that lead us to deeper insight into the effectiveness and improvement of theological education."⁴⁰ Each theological institution retains the task of determining what educational inputs, processes, and outcomes are valued. This independence answers the charge of reductionistic commodification. Because schools retain the responsibility for determining what should be assessed, theological educators retain the power to decide what forms of assessment they consider consistent with

their distinctive Christian educational vision. Like all educators, theological educators are responsible to give a coherent account of their stewardship.

Bridging worlds

A generation ago, philosopher Nelson Goodman⁴¹ drew attention to the ways in which communities make conceptual worlds, a complex and endless process that seminaries engage in as they socialize new faculty members and form seminarians into clerics. A seminary makes a world through a shared culture of symbols and values. In this paper I have argued that a stewardship perspective derived from management literature is consistent with the nature of higher education and with stewardship as it is understood in the Christian community. Thus, in Goodman's terms, stewardship is a world-bridging concept that persons of faith and secular educators may use to carry on meaningful conversations about the shared enterprise of education.

Secular stewardship theory honors the complexity of human persons and is a compatible vision of higher education that is not determined exclusively by markets and profits. Stewards are concerned with measurable results of processes and outcomes that matter and that, consequently, theological seminaries may legitimately create systems for assessment and quality enhancement. And so, it seems, the gulf between the world of theological education and the world of higher education is navigable. One day, there may be trade routes.

Timothy D. Lincoln is a PhD candidate in higher education administration at The University of Texas at Austin and associate dean for institutional effectiveness and library director at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

ENDNOTES

1. See Sukhwant Singh Bhatia, *Christian Higher Education at Dallas Theological Seminary: An Assessment of Doctor of Ministry Programs* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of North Texas, 2001); C. Ellis Nelson, *Using Evaluation in Theological Education* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1975); Gordon T. Smith, "Faculties that Listen; Schools that Learn: Assessment in Theological Education," in *Practical Wisdom: On Theological Teaching and Learning*, ed. Malcolm L. Warford, (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2004): 229–245.
2. Robert J. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 6.
3. Based on Max Weber's prophetic insight. See Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (April 1983): 147–160.
4. Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).
5. Yet a third frustration with assessment was expressed by one of the reviewers of the draft of this article, who stated that it was tedious to spell out explicitly what "every good teacher does instinctively and implicitly" when teaching.

6. Lex Donaldson, "The Ethereal Hand: Organizational Economics and Management Theory," *Academy of Management Review* 15, no. 3 (July 1990): 369–381.
7. Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling, "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs, and Ownership Structure," *Journal of Financial Economics* 3, no. 4 (October 1976): 305–360; John W. Pratt and Richard J. Zeckhauser, *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1985).
8. Loren Fox, *Enron: The Rise and Fall* (New York, NY: John Wiley, 2003); Brian W. Kulik, "Agency Theory, Reasoning and Culture at Enron: In Search of a Solution," *Journal of Business Ethics* 59, no. 4 (July 2005): 347–360.
9. Jensen and Meckling, "Theory of the Firm," 309.
10. See Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Katarina Schuth, *Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty*, Auburn Studies, no. 10 (New York, NY: Auburn Theological Seminary, February 2005).
11. For instance, Chris Argyris, *Integrating the Individual and the Organization* (New York, NY: Wiley, 1964), 23–33.
12. Lex Donaldson and James H. Davis, *CEO Governance and Shareholder Returns: Agency Theory or Stewardship Theory* (paper presented at the meeting of the Academy of Management, Washington, DC, 1989); James H. Davis, F. David Schoorman, and Lex Donaldson, "Toward a Stewardship Theory of Management," *Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 1 (1997): 20–47.
13. Clayton P. Alderfer, *Existence, Relatedness, and Growth: Human Needs in Organizational Settings* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1972).
14. Davis, Schoorman, and Donaldson, "Toward a Stewardship Theory of Management," 25.
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Who is it for?

The Publics of Theological Research

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ABSTRACT: This essay explores the variety of ways that one professor engages his academic research with constituencies and in venues that are not just school-based, but widely ranging public arenas. Moreover, such engagement, especially with faith-based communities, but not only those, may serve to inform and invigorate the research, and not at all in ways that detour the research from the search for "truth." The author reasons that if one's research is often shaped by one's teaching, and vice versa, why not explore a wide range of "teaching" opportunities and venues that are public and in service of both church and community, as well as school.

Introduction

To begin this essay on the publics of theological research, I would like to use a text from 1 Corinthians 12 that reads:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ . . . Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as [God] chose . . . The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." (1 Cor. 12:4–12, 14–19 NRSV).

What do these words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians have to do with the question of whom we serve with our theological research? For me, this text illustrates the need for all kinds of gifts of research within the academy, including the gifts of theological research that our publics—congregations, denominations, and communities in general—crave to engage with in meaningful and understandable ways. Theological educators, like those of us who serve in the schools of The Association of Theological Schools, face the dilemma that our potential audience for the results of our research can be multiple: our colleagues in the disciplines we represent, our students in the classrooms we teach, our institutional colleagues in the seminaries and divinity schools with whom we endeavor to prepare religious leaders, the religious bodies and communities of faith that those leaders will serve. We should also not forget the publishers who want our work, but often want it in ways that sell well, regardless of how satisfied we are with the final form the material takes. However, as Carey Newman has suggested, we should not settle for the fluff of “peanuts,” by which he means popular books that sell well but have little significant substance; rather, we should promote “nouns” in our writing, books that inform, and hopefully, some “verbs” as well, books that call us to action.¹

Religious vs. theological scholarship

With so many potential multiple audiences to serve, including publishers, how do we share and with whom to do we share our research? Such a question is particularly complicated when our various publics often have different expectations from scholars of religious studies, especially those specifically involved in that brand of religious scholarship known as theological scholarship. The public often wants to see its theologians more out front in the public sphere than, for example, scientists and engineers.

Of course, not all believe that theological scholarship should even be considered a part of academic scholarship, even religious academic scholarship. Carl Holladay’s comprehensive and erudite address on the shape of theological research argues how unhelpful it is to talk about a divide between church and academy, as if all of us in theological education do not serve both sides of the so-called divide—the church and the academy.² I think Paul’s Corinthian text on the diversity of gifts also helps us to argue against the tendency toward this dichotomy.

One recent expression of this dichotomy between church and academy, between religious and theological scholarship, comes from Michael V. Fox in a Society of Biblical Literature online forum.³ Fox writes that faith-based scholarship has no role in biblical or academic scholarship. “Faith-based study,” he argues, “is a different realm of intellectual activity that can dip into Bible scholarship for its own purposes, but cannot contribute to it.” Fox differentiates scholars who hold a personal faith but exercise what he calls “secular” academic scholarship with its search for truth based on evidence, not faith. He believes religious faith should be introduced only “in distinctly religious forums,” but not in the terms of the academy. Faith, according to Fox, should be confined to the realm of homiletics, spiritual enlightenment, or moral guid-

ance because of its normative tendencies. Academic research stays with evidence; faith is exercised in the absence of evidence. Fox paraphrases Aquinas: "There can . . . be no faith concerning matters which are objects of rational knowledge, for knowledge excludes faith."

Fox's fundamental concern is that he wants to exclude a biblical scholarship that uses the Bible to prove personal faith rather than learn from the fruits of historical biblical scholarship to enhance faith. However, I disagree with the way Fox wants to exclude faith from the academic scene altogether. First, faith-based scholarship, understood as scholarship motivated by faith to find evidence for faith rather than just scholarship that rests on evidence, could be misconstrued, and I think it often is by some in the academy, as what we are about in theological scholarship. This happens in particular because we in theological scholarship are concerned for and engaged with our publics in a variety of ways, including people of faith out in the realm of normative practice, and not just with our cohorts in the academic guild. For, in addition to serving as scholars of academic disciplines, the vocation of theological scholarship is to enhance the intellectual life of the church, especially the religious leaders of the church. Such scholarship, within a broadly defined public arena that takes theology, talk about God, seriously, is not scholarship on the prowl to prove faith, but rather scholarship that "concerns itself with God and the things of God," as Mark Toulouse wrote in his address at the 2005 Lilly Conference on Theological Research.⁴ Toulouse cited the 1950s Niebuhr study on theological education, which stated that "Theological scholarship is, before all other things, essentially theological."⁵ Thus theological scholarship should not be equated with faith-based scholarship as described by Michael Fox, that is, with faith seeking to prove faith rather than faith seeking understanding, even if that understanding shakes faith to its core and reforms faith in new ways.

Yet there is something else that bothers me about Fox's critique of faith-based scholarship, besides the danger of some dismissing theological scholarship for its connection to faith. To dismiss persons of faith seeking truth outright—unless they put their faith completely aside and follow a thoroughly secular, "just the facts, ma'am" approach—seems to me to leave out a potential avenue and contributor of truth and knowledge, that is, faith seeking faith, albeit the findings from such endeavors must be handled carefully. Fox himself writes, "Sometimes it is worthwhile to go through a faith-motivated publication and pick out the wheat from the chaff, but time is limited." So a potential avenue for truth, a "faith-motivated" research, as Fox refers to it, is rejected for lack of time. This does not seem to me to be the most scholarly excuse for dismissing the endeavors of people of faith. Nonetheless, even if one were to find time to look for research gems in faith-motivated effort, Fox seems to believe that such efforts need to be set aside, "not out of prejudice but out of an awareness that they are irrelevant to the scholarly enterprise."

Here again, however, I would cite the text from Paul:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge ac-

... according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit
... All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who
allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.
(1 Cor. 12:7–9a, 11 NRSV).

I realize that I cannot make this text about the abuse of spiritual gifts in 50 CE Corinth a text about twenty-first century religious and theological scholarship. But, by analogy, it seems to me that any research *modus operandi* that leaves out the potential contribution of a segment of scholarly endeavors, in this case, those that are faith-motivated, plays a game of exclusion of gifts that can possibly be available to us to find truth. I agree, however, that research efforts, theological or otherwise, that already have a preconceived notion of what they need in order to help prove existing beliefs can be misleading and unscholarly. Fox's real concern, which he states at the end of his brief paper, is "pseudo-scientific claims [that] are demanding a place in the science curriculum." However, he paints such a broad picture of faith-based scholarship or faith-motivated scholarship, which I do not agree are the same thing, that his paper is in danger of branding all of us who do theological scholarship as useless. Moreover, many of the publics served by theological scholarship appreciate and even covet a scholarly effort that relates to their faith, even if it challenges long-held beliefs. This then begs the question, who are the potential publics for our theological scholarship? And how does their faith play into our theological scholarship and research?

Testimonies

Testimony 1

To get us closer to some answers to these questions, like a good Pentecostal scholar (and the two are not an oxymoron), I would like to turn from my text to share some personal testimonies. First, in my recently published book, *Servant Leadership: Jesus and Paul* (completed with the help of an ATS Lilly grant), I shared my motivations for pursuing a research study on leadership in the Synoptic Gospels and Paul's letters:

The motivations for this study are twofold. First, as a Puerto Rican raised in New York City, I know persons, especially in the storefront Pentecostal churches of my youth, who lacked access to traditional opportunities for training and leadership. Nonetheless, they exercised significant leadership roles within the Latino Christian church, as well as other community institutions of the city. After seminary, I began to work in the theological education of such individuals and I also pursued graduate studies in New Testament. I became intrigued by the question: Is there a biblical perspective relative to the issue of access to and opportunity for leadership? Thus in my graduate studies and beyond I have explored the question of who became a leader in the churches founded by the Apostle Paul and what was the social status of those leaders with respect to

the strict, hierarchical social structure of Greco-Roman society. I hoped to make a biblical-theological contribution to the work of urban theological education, including the preparation of Latino and Latina church leaders in our communities. I strongly believe that such a motivation and line of inquiry contributes to leadership issues in churches of all races and denominations.⁶

When I wrote a passage similar to this in the proposal for my dissertation some fifteen years ago, one of the readers suggested this might be a project for a Doctor of Ministry degree. Fortunately, the wishes of my New Testament advisor prevailed and I went forward with the project for a PhD thesis from the department of religious studies in Boston University Graduate School. Now, are these motivations as described in my book, “faith-based,” and therefore invalid (as perhaps Michael Fox might argue or as implied perhaps by the suggestion about mine being a DMin project topic)? Or, did my experience in a faith-based situation growing up in New York City, and then in a theological education setting serving a particular public—the urban communities of Boston—motivate an honest, scholarly research inquiry in Paul and later the Gospels? I think the latter, and I hope a PhD in religious studies with a concentration in New Testament and Christian Origins and a subsequent publication based on that research, and beyond, demonstrate this honest, scholarly inquiry, but also the publics that motivated it and may benefit from it.

Testimony 2

A second testimony also relates to my book. On January 26, 2006, Hartford Seminary celebrated a book-signing lecture, during which I spoke on the topic, “Religious Leadership in the 21st Century: Lessons from Jesus and Paul.” In other words, I shared a summary of my research findings on leadership in *Jesus and Paul* (the noun, to echo Carey Newman’s metaphors) and its implications for the practice of religious leadership today (a verb). Put another way, the final chapter of the book does some hermeneutical application (verb) of what I learned from my exegetical efforts on leadership in *Jesus and Paul* (the noun). The public that came out for that event included faculty colleagues, seminary alums, current students (mostly mine), pastors, and friends from the community. Among the latter (friends from the community) was the president of a universal health care foundation in Connecticut, who had previously asked me to help him organize Latino/a pastors from the Hartford area around this issue of health care. As a community leader, this foundation executive, also a Latino, was interested in my research on leadership in the New Testament. Further, like a good evangelist, he invited a friend of his, a Connecticut state judge and well known Latina community leader, who was also interested in connecting her faith to her leadership. She, too, was intrigued by my work in *Jesus and Paul* as community leaders in their own right. They all sat through my lecture, came up to have the book signed, and appreciated my efforts at connecting theological scholarship to their everyday lives as community leaders and people of faith.

In this regard, I was reminded of the statement by Robin Lovin and Richard Mouw in the ATS study about the public character of theological education: “[T]he ATS standards of accreditation regard this involvement with diverse publics, along with scholarly collaboration, freedom of inquiry, and global awareness, as four key characteristics of theological scholarship.”⁷ Lovin and Mouw go on to cite a General Institutional Standard that states each accredited school shall “assume responsibility for relating to the church, the academic community, and the broader public.”⁸ Stated this way, the standard on public theology allows for the gifts of each school to be exercised on behalf of its publics in ways that each school deems fit, but the challenge for a public presence is laid before our member schools and its constituent faculty.

Before the ATS study of the public character of theological education, an earlier study by Auburn Theological Seminary’s Center for the Study of Theological Education titled *Missing Connections: Public Perceptions of Theological Education and Religious Leadership* noted the invisibility of seminaries to the leaders of community organizations within their own city and region.⁹ Lovin and Mouw also cite the proposal that created the Public Character project, which stated that, “In matters purely religious, public media turn to the expertise of theological schools for comment and analysis, but in matters that are not overtly religious, yet having profound religious and moral implications, the voices of theological schools are virtually silent.”¹⁰ Yet the people and the communities outside the walls of our seminaries care increasingly about religion; as such, our seminaries and their theologians should care about having a hearing in those communities on matters religious, political, economic, and social. However, going back to our text from Paul, not everyone is gifted in the same way to address these kinds of public issues theologically, but we need at least some in the theological school who can make the connection, with their academic research, to the everyday concerns of faith and praxis in church and community. We need both nouns *and* verbs in theological research and publication.

Testimony 3

My third testimony speaks to this need for connecting our theological scholarship in public ways because of the increased religious interests of our publics. Just two days after my book signing lecture, I went to a community gathering of Latino/a and African American pastors in Connecticut, as they organized an effort to call upon city and state political leaders to pay attention to the needs of the poor and marginalized in the state on issues of immigration, affordable housing, fair wages, and health. Clergy were taking the lead on this organizing effort, a major political statement for what was otherwise a fairly conservative, theologically, cadre of black and Latino churches in Connecticut’s urban centers. The mayor of New Haven (the location of the meeting), who was also a candidate for governor of Connecticut, spoke briefly and in his remarks made reference to “Jesus as a politician who responded to the needs of the poor in his community.” He did not mean an electoral politician, but a prophetic politician, a public theologian, in the parlance of today. It just so happened that sitting at the table next to mine was the same judge who had attended my lecture two days previously. She turned to me when she heard

those words from the mayor and smiled, as if to say, “Weren’t you saying something like that the other day?” A few weeks after that event, the judge invited me to join her, her husband, and another judge for lunch to discuss the Bible, faith, and her role as a community leader and judge. Everyone seems to be talking religion and faith, and many want the help of theological scholars to sort things out.

Again, however, I am mindful of the Corinthian text and the variety of gifts present in the church and in the theological school. Not everyone focuses his or her research in this way or addresses the same public in quite the same way with quite the same skill set. Unsure that I could respond to all of the judge’s concerns, I invited a pastor to join me at that lunch to fill in gaps where I, as an academic, might not be able to reach. Nonetheless, the fact that not every faculty member can or should do this kind of outreach work with his or her theological research is precisely the reason we should encourage and celebrate a diverse theological faculty. Just as the body of the church has a variety of spiritual gifts, I would argue that a theological school should have in its arsenal a variety of research gifts at the ready to serve its diverse publics—including the academic guild, the church, alumni/ae, the surrounding community, and the national and international scene.

And not every school will have enough scholars to cover the variety of potential publics. At Hartford Seminary, we have several scholars of Islamic Studies, including two who are Muslim. This past semester I chaired the contract review of one of these Muslim scholars, and one of the issues discussed was his extensive travel schedule to so many different parts of the Islamic world. Our colleague shared that his research approach is to learn as much as he can about the language, culture, history, and customs of a country whose thinkers he wants to study, and to do so in context for several months, if possible, over the summer or a research leave. Not everyone can travel or receive as many Fulbright Fellowships as this colleague has, but we at Hartford Seminary are fortunate to have such a researcher on our faculty, one who produces helpful scholarly guides to religious and political thought in the Islamic world. We need a diverse theological faculty if for no other reason than to ensure the various publics connected to our theological schools may be served by the diversity of gifts, research agendas, and skills in public dissemination of our research in theology.

One last testimony

The Universal Health Care Foundation president, whom I helped to organize some of the Latino/a pastors from Hartford, asked me to consider a theological reflection on health issues as a way of helping the pastors understand, in their own terms, their responsibilities in addressing these issues. As a New Testament scholar, all I could offer was a study of the healing stories in the Gospels and their relation to healing, health, and medicine in the ancient world. So John Pilch’s *Healing in the New Testament* and Howard Clark Kee’s *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* have been my conversation partners the last couple of months as I struggle to understand healing and health care in the ancient world and then translate those scholarly studies

of ancient healing systems and my own exegetical work in the healing stories of the Gospels to the concerns of the Latino community and their need for adequate health care. Do I allow my faith and the public's need for some theological reflection on these issues to determine historical and exegetical research and outcomes? I hope not. Is my research motivated by faith and my commitments to the Latino and other marginalized publics in the inner cities of Connecticut and New England? I hope so. Theology and faith do not predetermine historical and theological reflection, but they do motivate them as do the publics we serve as theologians and theological researchers.

Some reflection on teaching and research

Finally, after taking a text and sharing some testimonies, I want to say a word about teaching in relation to our research and the publics for whom we teach and write. In short, I want to ask not only the question of "whom," but also "why." Why should theological schools and their faculty *care* to serve its various publics, including by making our theological research more readily available? I think because it is a vocational choice we have made to be the teachers of the church. I love that phrase—"teachers of the church." Years ago, a good friend and colleague, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, who teaches religious education at Claremont School of Theology, told me the story of how the late, great theologian, Orlando Costas, challenged her vocationally. Conde-Frazier was struggling with the decision about whether to go for her doctoral degree or stay in the pastorate, which she loved. She tells me how Costas, a big fellow with a booming voice, almost jumped out of his chair in his dean's office at Andover Newton Theological School and practically yelled at her, "But you must do your doctorate, for you are a teacher of the church!" Both Conde-Frazier and I, and I am sure those of you engaged in theological education in seminaries and schools of theology, have taken such a vocational call to heart.

I was intrigued by the recent Auburn study, *Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty*, a study of theological faculty conducted in 2003.¹¹ The study demonstrated, perhaps to the surprise of many who look at seminaries from afar, the emphasis that our theological faculty has on the ministry of teaching. Some theological school-types (the study cites nondenominational mainline Protestant schools in particular) tend to emphasize research over teaching, but only slightly. Most faculty members see research in service of their teaching. In addition, the study also showed that, as a whole, our teaching emphasizes enhancing the critical and theological thinking skills of our students rather than just focusing on content mastery and professional and spiritual formation. According to the study, however, theological faculty also "strongly agree" that teaching has a "spiritual or religious character" and even that we rely on God's presence in our teaching. This seems a far cry from the concern to leave faith out of the picture in research and teaching that I mentioned earlier in the SBL Forum piece by Michael Fox.

Such findings documented by the Auburn study illustrate the vocational commitments of theological faculty to teaching, to research in support of teaching, and to our personal theological commitments as well as our aca-

demic disciplines. This speaks well for a theological faculty that responds to the needs of our publics. The notion that theological seminary faculty sit in ivory towers and are divorced from the life of faith, the life of the church, and the concerns of our world has been debunked by this wide-ranging study. For example, even though there is evidence of a decreased percentage of ordained faculty members in theological schools, there is no decline in faculty involvement in and leadership of religious practice and worship. This, too, shows our connection to the world of our publics, including their world of faith.

At the same time that religious involvement of theological faculty has remained steady or even increased, it is heartening, and perhaps also surprising, that the study asserts that “current faculty [in theological schools] publish more than their counterparts ten years ago.”¹² From my perspective, it seems that engagement with our publics, rather than take time away from our research, may very well invigorate it. As Bonnie Miller-McLemore has suggested, these “other things,” including engagement with faith communities, may very well be the impetus for some very creative research projects waiting to be undertaken.¹³ Indeed, interviews with seminary graduates conducted by the Auburn researchers indicate that, “the essential ingredients of the most powerful teaching for ministry were a passionate concern for religious truth and a deep concern for communities and persons living their faith in the world.”¹⁴ These “theological” qualities of our seminary faculty demonstrate that teaching, research, and concern for our publics go hand-in-hand in this vocational choice we have made to be teachers of the church.

Conclusion

I hope this essay has been helpful in thinking about the publics served by theological scholarship. The 1 Corinthians’ text supports the argument that all gifts are important in the task of theological scholarship, including those gifts of research motivated by personal faith and theological commitment. The testimonies show how theological research has become an opportunity for public theology in a variety of ways in my own faculty service these last few years. I am sure other scholars can cite examples in their own work. And, with the help of the Auburn study on theological faculties, I reflected on the vocation of teaching that belongs to seminary faculty, a theological vocation that invigorates both research and engagement with publics in church and community. The work of theological research has intrinsic value for what it contributes to the larger world of academic research, and for how it meets the vocational goals of scholars and their academic disciplines. And it also has value for those publics somehow touched by the work of theological scholarship through publications and presentations in public lectures or workshops, or, more likely, and perhaps most enduringly, because the work has been instrumental in helping to form the religious leaders who serve these constituencies even more directly than the scholars themselves ever could. Therefore, I urge readers of this journal to keep thinking, keep writing, and keep sharing.

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ENDNOTES

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Advancing Racial/Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education: A Model for Reflection and Action

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ABSTRACT: During the 2006–2007 academic year, a group of students, faculty, and staff at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education engaged in a series of workshops to reflect on fundamental concepts and practices of racial/ethnic diversity and to generate the conditions to establish institutional and academic policies that will help Union-PSCE become a more effective multiracial/multiethnic institution. The author and coordinator of this process presents here the model of reflection and action that guided these efforts and shares his experiences in implementing them.

Introduction

Despite efforts to increase racial/ethnic diversity¹ in theological education during the last three decades, some but not enough progress has been made. Racial/ethnic enrollment in ATS schools grew more than fourfold between 1977 and 2007,² and racial/ethnic faculty representation at ATS schools in 2004 was comparable overall to that of U.S. higher education in general, with Hispanics and African Americans better represented at ATS schools.³ Yet the last four years have seen a flattening of the thirty-year growth rate, according to ATS data reports, with no significant increase of either full-time racial/ethnic faculty or racial/ethnic students in member institutions.⁴ And student enrollment and faculty of ATS schools do not fully reflect the racial/ethnic demographics of the broader North American population, with the Hispanic/Latino/a population particularly underrepresented.⁵ The 1996 accrediting standards emphasize that “attention to diversity is not simply a matter of inviting participation, but a lens in the theological school’s essential tasks of learning, teaching, research, and formation.”⁶ However, leaders of theological education recognize that “our right convictions have not been overwhelmingly successful in changing the face of theological education.”⁷

Issues of faculty and student representation in theological institutions could be explained by the fact that within certain racial/ethnic groups (e.g., African Americans and Hispanics) there are not enough candidates with the academic qualifications to either enter seminary or to be hired as faculty.⁸ Of course, this lack of candidates could be associated with the history of racism in this country, because these racial/ethnic groups for centuries have been curtailed if not excluded from the educational opportunities available to most white people.

But, even if we have to accept the reality of a “low or insufficient supply of candidates,” how do we explain the limited or absent role of multicultural diversity as a lens for “the essential tasks of learning, teaching, research, and formation” in our seminaries? Why do seminaries seem to be complacent with token representations of racial/ethnic individuals within their student bodies and faculties? Why do most theological institutions think they have done their job because they celebrate Black History Month or provide elective courses on Third-World theologies or allow opportunities for occasional multicultural worship services on campus? Why is what counts as scholarly work and research usually judged only through the academic and cultural lens of a particular group? Why do the ways “others” learn and the issues and perspectives “others” bring to the classroom, to teaching, and to research not significantly affect what we study and how we teach and learn in most theological institutions?

Answers to these and other similar questions have much to do with issues of race and racism. In North America, theological education—still dominated by white male, Euro-centric perspectives that unconsciously, and sometimes consciously—mirrors in different degrees the still prevalent racism of the broader culture. This placing of race and racism into the conversation of racial/ethnic diversity in theological institutions is as uncomfortable and painful as it is necessary to address. For, as Mark Taylor says,

Every community of theological education is, and needs to be, engaged in tradition building. But this constructive act of forming a shared legacy or heritage becomes exclusive and silencing of others *unless* that act also carefully attends to the present locations of those doing the constructing. Under the guise of constructing a shared tradition, groups with privileged access to power, or groups that share a relatively homogeneous cultural identity, often overlook the ways that tradition serves their particular interests and often actually works against the interests of others.⁹

Nevertheless, my interest here is not to discuss how race and racism have impacted or continue to impact theological institutions and academic programs, even though it is a theme that deserves much attention in theological education.¹⁰ My interest here is more practical in nature. What I want is to present a model of institutional change for advancing racial/ethnic diversity in theological institutions. It is a model that invites both reflection and action based on the Multicultural Organizational Development model (MCOB) currently being used to promote multicultural change in higher education institutions. First, I will present an adaptation of this model for the context of theological institutions, which I will call MARED (Model for Advancing Racial/Ethnic Diversity). Then, I will share the process and results of the efforts to implement MARED at my own theological institution. The overarching purpose of this paper is to present a model for reflection and action that could persuade and help theological institutions move more intentionally and effectively toward embracing racial/ethnic diversity as central to their mission, academic programs, and community life.

MARED: A model for advancing racial/ethnic diversity in theological education

General observations

First, MARED is not a new model for institutional change; rather, it is an adaptation I have made to the MCODE model for the particular context of theological institutions. As such, it relies closely on the assumptions, components, and process of the MCODE model. The critical difference is that MARED incorporates insights from my own experience as a theological educator and as a member of a racial/ethnic group working in a mostly white theological institution. The reason I chose the MCODE model is that it integrates theories of organizational development with theories and practices of multicultural development. Theories of organizational development address issues of social diversity and change in an institution's culture. Theories of multicultural development focus on issues of social justice. The integration of these two approaches, namely, of social inclusion (i.e., representation and participation of racial/ethnic persons) and social justice (i.e., elimination of practices of exclusion and discrimination) makes MCODE a relevant model to examine and promote changes related to issues of racial/ethnic diversity in theological institutions.¹¹

Second, I present this model with the awareness that many theological institutions are already committed to multicultural diversity, particularly in member schools of The Association of Theological Schools.¹² For many, this commitment focuses on social inclusion, that is, efforts to increase representation of racial/ethnic minorities among students and faculty. For others, this commitment is also expressed in the content of individual courses and in campus life activities in which racial/ethnic diversity issues are considered.¹³ Nevertheless, for many the concern for social justice, inside and outside theological institutions, invites a much broader and deeper work.¹⁴

Third, I offer this model upholding two strong convictions. My first conviction is that participation and involvement of "power-holders" of theological institutions, namely, deans, faculties, presidents, and boards of trustees, are critical for advancing racial/ethnic diversity in theological education. When those who have the power to make decisions become informed and challenged by the issues and importance of multicultural diversity for the mission of theological education and the mission of the church at large, then thorough, effective, and steady advances are going to happen. Of course, the voices of students, staff, and even representatives from church judicatories are necessary, but they are not sufficient to bring about the institutional and academic conditions for a more effective and complete implementation of racial/ethnic diversity in our seminaries and theological schools. In this regard, one challenge for theological institutions is finding a process of reflection and action that could enable the advancement of racial/ethnic diversity. Another challenge is finding a group of people within the theological institution willing to commit time, energy, and thought to lead that process. As a model for institutional change, MARED aims at offering an answer to both of these challenges.

Related to the one above, my second conviction is that faculties have a particular power to either deter or promote racial/ethnic diversity at a given theological school, both at the institutional and academic levels. Faculties can be either the main source of resistance to institutional change or become the greatest force to initiate change and to make it work. This assumption stresses the point that, in the particular case of theological institutions, no significant change will happen without the committed involvement of a significant number of their faculty members.¹⁵ For Ann I. Morey, a specialist of multicultural development in higher education, “the most critical factor in bringing about structural change and making progress toward the goal of an infused or transformed curriculum is a committed and knowledgeable faculty.”¹⁶ This presents theological faculty with the challenge to overcome two characteristics of “the ethos of American higher education” that, according to theological educator Edward Farley, we have emulated in theological education. The first characteristic is tenure. The second is the traditional view most faculties have of teaching. Thus, for Farley, tenure and promotion depend on accomplishments within a faculty’s specialized fields and, therefore, a “faculty member’s primary loyalty is more likely to be to the field than to the school itself . . .” Because of that, he considers it very difficult for faculty in theological schools to participate in (or even less, generate) wide institutional transformations or to try new pedagogical paradigms.¹⁷ Maybe, through the implementation of an institutional-change tool such as MARED, theological faculty truly committed to racial/ethnic diversity could provide Farley and others with a different perspective of the role of faculty in theological institutions.

MARED: Its assumptions

Four assumptions undergird MARED as a model for the advancement of racial/ethnic diversity in theological institutions. The first is that *racial/ethnic diversity involves concern for both social inclusion and social justice*. This concern demands attention simultaneously to issues of racial/ethnic representation and to issues related to “disparities” and/or discrimination. Theological institutions that want to advance racial/ethnic diversity should demonstrate commitment to both in their missions, policies, practices, academic programs, course content, and classroom dynamics.

The second assumption is that this model *embraces diversity beyond race and ethnicity*. Precisely because social justice is a central concern in this model, it advocates the common good of all and, therefore, advocates for the elimination of any form of discrimination (e.g., discrimination on the base of sexual orientation, class, age, religious affiliation, physical disabilities, etc.). Other forms of inclusion are also needed in theological education and many forms of discrimination need to be fought against in theological institutions, churches, and the broader society. In addition, the intersection or overlap of racial/ethnic concerns with the concerns of other oppressed groups makes MARED a flexible model for including them in the goals for institutional transformation.

Third, MARED assumes *there are already conditions in most if not all theological institutions, as well as all their theological disciplines, to plant the seeds of multicultural diversity*. No theological school will reject the values of human dignity

and human equality or the importance of social inclusion and social justice. The Scriptures themselves witness to God's intent of creating a diverse world, to the interplay of multiple cultures and theological perspectives, and to different ways of interpreting God's presence and action in the world. The history of our theological disciplines reminds us of the variegated approaches to study and ways to teach them in light of different historical circumstances. What we need most today is to rediscover the importance of issues of diversity for each of our theological disciplines for the sake of the mission of our theological institutions and for the sake of the ministry of the church in today's world.

MARED's fourth and final assumption is the centrality of *dialogue as a relational and transformational activity of individuals and groups with the goal of transforming the unequal and unjust realities of the world in which they live*.¹⁸ It is true that raising the consciousness of individuals about issues of social inclusion and social justice is "necessary but not enough" to bring about institutional change. But it is also true that if institutions are to change, it is because individuals within them are willing to take time to dialogue about those issues and do something about them. That is why MARED requires the participation, voice, and experience of people representing all sectors of a theological institution in order to generate the reflection, enthusiasm, and commitment to action toward fuller racial/ethnic diversity.

MARED: Its components

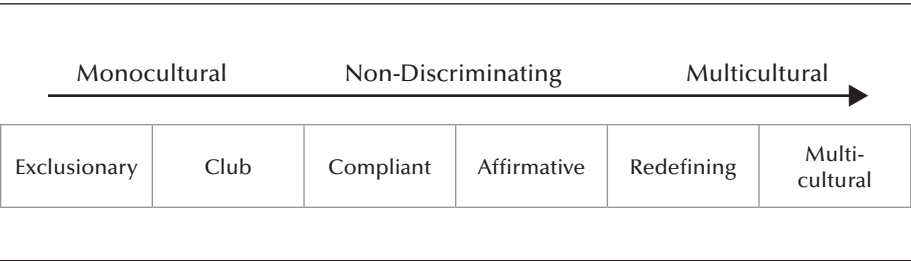
Following the same structure as the MCOD model, MARED has three main components: goals, a racial/ethnic development continuum, and a process.

1. The goals. The goals of MARED are meant to be general and generative. They are general so that they do not close or determine the horizons of institutional change or become limiting standards to judge the nature and the extent of change that is pursued by a theological institution. The goals are generative in the sense of having the capacity to originate and produce change in the direction of racial/ethnic diversity, that is, for social inclusion and social justice. Each theological institution, within its particular tradition and in light of its particular sociocultural context, should have the power and responsibility to determine how much and what kind of change is possible. Therefore, the goals of MARED are:

- a. to broaden and deepen the understanding theological schools have of issues related to racial/ethnic diversity inside and outside their institutional context;
- b. to help theological institutions assess the impact of their present understanding of racial/ethnic diversity in their mission, organizations, policies, practices, academic programs, community life, and teaching and learning dynamics;
- c. to encourage institutional and individual actions that will move theological schools to become more congruent with their theological, biblical, and pastoral convictions about racial/ethnic diversity;

- d. to promote the creation of a permanent institutional structure that values and works for the continuous evaluation and development of racial/ethnic diversity within and beyond theological institutions.

2. *Racial/Ethnic developmental continuum.* The main purpose of the developmental continuum is to help theological institutions self-assess their understanding and practices of racial/ethnic diversity. It is a tool that offers a conceptual framework to help determine where a seminary is, where it wants to be, and what actions are needed to achieve higher and more complex levels of diversity. The continuum proposed by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman, creators of the MCOD model, consists of six stages and three broad categories as illustrated in the figure below.¹⁹ They use the term *monocultural* to mean the dominance of one racial/ethnic group and the term *multicultural* to denote multiracial or multiethnic. Although the continuum shows a linear progression, it really refers to a more complex developmental process in which regressions or a more spiral progress may take place.



For the explanation of each of the stages of the continuum, I follow very closely the characterization developed by Jackson and Hardiman,²⁰ although adapted for the specific context of theological institutions. I will use the term *seminary* as a generic term that includes freestanding theological seminaries as well as theological schools in colleges and universities.

The Exclusionary Seminary. Although it is rare to find today a theological institution in this stage, most institutions can identify a department or group of people that represent, if not defend, the characteristics of this stage. In this stage an institution, department, or group within it, is openly:

- devoted to maintaining the majority groups' dominance and privilege as are usually manifested in the institution's mission and admissions policies for staff, faculty, and students;
- hostile to anything that might be seen as a concern for social justice or social diversity in the institution (or department) and, therefore, very doubtful it would consider any change toward becoming a multicultural seminary.

The Club Seminary. At this stage, a theological institution does not openly advocate the supremacy of the dominant group but implicitly

maintains the privileges of those who have traditionally held power within the institution. It does so by:

- establishing mission statements, policies, norms, procedures from the exclusive perspective of the power-holders (e.g., trustees, president, deans, faculty);
- admitting limited numbers of people from racial/ethnic groups into the institution as long as they submit to the institutions' perspective and have the "appropriate" credentials;
- committing to issues of social justice and social diversity as long as it is convenient and does not cause any disturbance within the seminary or its constituency.

The Compliant Seminary. A theological school in this stage responds basically to outside pressures to do something regarding multicultural diversity (for instance, ATS Commission on Accrediting's standards for accreditation), but it is not fully convinced that it is important for the seminary or for the church at large to pay attention to issues of social inclusion or social justice. A seminary in this stage usually:

- provides access to members of racial/ethnic groups previously excluded but mainly "at the bottom of the system" (e.g., student body, low-level staff, maintenance and housekeeping personnel) and only occasionally hires "exceptionally qualified" individuals at the faculty level or high administrative positions;
- does not allow for significant changes in the structure, mission, and culture of the seminary as a result of the accepted increment of social diversity within it (e.g., within the staff, faculty and/or student body);
- maintains silence and does not challenge the majority's prejudiced attitudes and behaviors against racial/ethnic groups within the institution, inside or outside the classrooms;
- commits to social justice issues to look good to external observers while carefully avoiding offending the dominant constituencies of the institution.

The Affirming Seminary. In the Affirming Seminary, there is an explicit awareness of the importance of both social inclusion and social justice, grounded on sound theological and biblical principles and reflected in more congruent institutional policies and practices. An Affirming Seminary is usually:

- committed to eliminating the discriminatory practices and inherent advantages given to members of the majority group in the theological school and in society;
- active in recruiting and promoting members of racial/ethnic groups at all levels;
- implementing programs that support and increase the growth and development of minorities for them to achieve success within it;

- encouraging all members of the seminary's community to think and behave in a nonoppressive, nondiscriminatory manner;
- willing to conduct diversity awareness programs for some or all members of the seminary's community.

The Redefining Seminary. While the Affirming Seminary is one that values, respects, and celebrates racial/ethnic diversity, the Redefining Seminary is one that works harder at learning from it. The Redefining Seminary is not fully content with being nonexclusive and nonoppressive. Thus, a theological school at this stage:

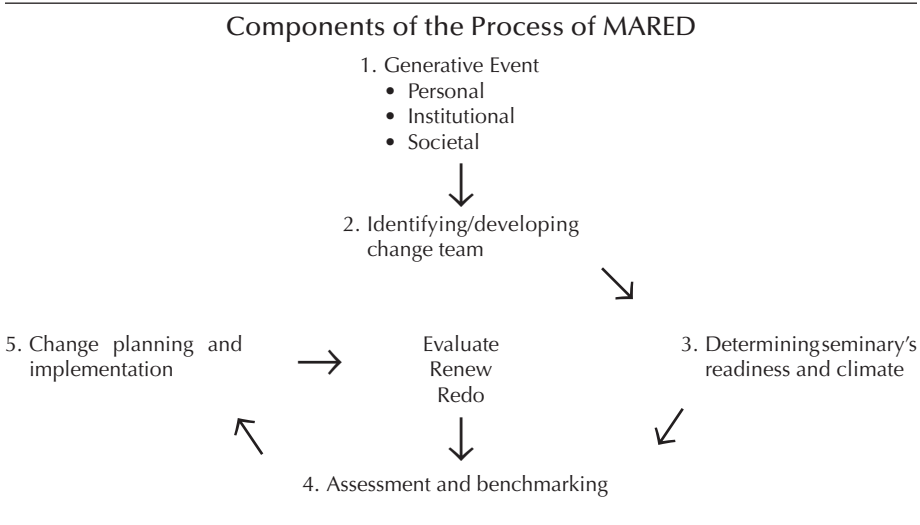
- works intentionally toward an institutional environment that goes beyond managing diversity to one that values and capitalizes on diversity in all areas (e.g., academics, community life, institutional policies and practices);
- looks for ways to ensure the full growth of all racial/ethnic perspectives as a method of enhancing growth and effectiveness of the whole institution;
- questions the reality of relying solely on one cultural perspective as a basis for the institution's mission, policies, and practices;
- envisions and plans for new ways of becoming an effective and congruent diverse institution where the inclusion, participation, and empowerment of all its members is guaranteed;
- develops and implements policies and practices that distribute power among all of the diverse groups in the institution.

The Multicultural (Multiracial/Multiethnic) Seminary. This stage describes the ultimate vision of a multiracial/multiethnic theological institution, and it remains as a statement of that ideal. A distinctive characteristic of this stage is that the theological institution moves beyond the internal institutional efforts to connect to and support efforts for social inclusion and social justice in the larger community and society. A Multicultural Seminary strives to:

- reflect the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, policies, and practices at the institutional, communal, and academic levels;
- eradicate social oppression in all forms within the institution;
- include members of diverse cultural and social groups as full participants in decisions that shape the whole institution;
- generate and/or support efforts in the broader community to promote social inclusion and to eliminate all forms of discrimination and social oppression.

3. *The process.* The process of MARED has two fundamental goals. The first goal is to allow theological institutions to create the conditions to evaluate where a theological institution is within the continuum of racial/ethnic

development. The second goal is to help theological institutions generate reflections and implement actions that will help them move to the next stage on the developmental continuum. The process of MARED consists of five steps (one more than the process of the original MCODE model): (1) the generative event (not part of the MCODE model); (2) identification of the change team; (3) determination of the readiness and climate of the seminary; (4) assessment or benchmarking of the seminary as it currently exists; and (5) change planning and implementation. The diagram below illustrates all of the components and the ways they are related. A brief description of each step follows.



1. *The generative event.* This step is not present in the MCODE process proposed by Jackson and Hardiman. I call it the “generative event.” Something needs to happen inside or outside an institution for it to move at a different pace and/or in a different direction. It usually takes an external force, an event from outside, to disrupt the typical functioning of a theological institution. That which causes something new to emerge is what I am calling the generative event. It may be a sudden situation or one that gradually surfaces and has an effect in some or all parts of a theological institution. The Civil Rights Movement is a good example of a societal event that influenced how many theological institutions thought of themselves and how they went about their mission. Similarly, a generative event may start with a transforming experience of a person within the institution. For instance, a faculty member, a student, or a person from the staff, may feel called to advocate for a particular cause after being exposed to or being involved in a life transforming experience (e.g., a conference, retreat, meeting, trip). If that person is committed enough to that cause and finds some support within the institution, she or he will find ways to impact the whole institution. Finally, an institutional situation or crisis may become the generative event that will move a theological institution into new directions. For instance, the hiring of a new president or the hiring of new

faculty member could bring new dynamics and ideas that could generate important changes in a seminary.

2. *Identifying/Developing a change team.* As a result of a generative event, it becomes necessary to identify and develop a group of people to channel efforts toward greater multicultural diversity. This step relates to the assumption above that no institutional change will happen without the involvement of a committed group within a theological school, even though it may start by the initiative of one or two individuals. The change team (or whatever name it gives itself) should represent most, if not all major constituencies of the seminary (e.g., staff, students, faculty, and board of trustees) and is responsible for coordinating and implementing the entire process. To facilitate and guide its work, the change team could hire an external consultant, but this is not strictly necessary if there are one or two people within the theological school fully committed to issues of racial/ethnic diversity and who are knowledgeable about the process of institutional change and racial/ethnic development issues.

3. *Determining a seminary's readiness and climate.* It is critical for a theological institution to know and to understand where it is situated regarding issues of social diversity and social justice. In other words, it is necessary to determine the readiness and the prevalent climate of the theological institution for opening itself to the processes required for advancing racial/ethnic diversity. *Readiness* indicates how prepared a seminary is to initiate transformative actions toward a particular goal, in this case that of advancing racial/ethnic diversity. Determining readiness involves finding out the seminary's existing understandings and practices of social diversity and social justice. Those understandings and practices are reflected and operating in the institution's mission, its forms of organization and policies, its patterns of community life, its academic programs, and its educational practices. The level of readiness of an institution will help the change team determine how prepared the seminary is to fully engage in the process of advancing racial/ethnic diversity.

In addition to *readiness* I consider it important to determine an institution's multicultural *climate*. By *climate* I mean the prevailing conditions and values of a place over a period of time. While *readiness* provides a perspective of "where an institution is" *climate* provides a perspective of "where an institution has been" at different points of its history. This allows members of an institution to be surprised by a past filled with concepts and practices that demonstrate a great commitment to issues of social justice and social diversity that somehow may have been forgotten and need to be recovered and also reveals pervasive patterns of discrimination and oppression that need to be transformed. The climate of an institution helps the change team to determine the historical leanings of that institution regarding concepts and practices of social justice and social diversity. A strong overlap of both readiness and climate will be found if there is a strong continuity between past and present understandings and behaviors in regard to racial/ethnic diversity.

To determine the readiness and climate of a theological institution, the change team needs two things: first, a system of gathering data (e.g., surveys, interviews, institutional records) and second, criteria to study and evaluate that data. First, the change team must develop a set of questions that will guide and ensure the collection of pertinent information. Second, the change team will use the Racial/Ethnic Development Continuum as the template by which the data gathered are analyzed and evaluated. The set of questions are first to be answered by the change team. They should also be presented to representative groups of students and staff within the institution and to a sampling of the seminary's power-holders (e.g., board of trustees, president, deans, and faculty). To give an idea of the kind of questions that can be asked in this step, I have reworked a series of questions Bailey Jackson calls the MCOB Readiness Test²¹ to make them more clear and pertinent to theological institutions. I have also added some follow-up questions to broaden or deepen some of the original questions. The questions of the readiness test are as follows:

- How are instances of racial/ethnic discrimination handled in the theological institution? Are there policies in place to guide institutional actions?
- Is social diversity valued in the seminary? At all levels? In which ways?
- Is there an explicit commitment to social justice? Where can it be found?
- Has the leadership of the theological school made it known to all its constituencies that social justice is a value supported in the institution? How? To whom has it been made known?
- How well does the leadership model its value for diversity and social justice? For instance, how well does the theological faculty model value for diversity and social justice in their courses and classroom dynamics?
- Is a commitment to diversity and social justice clearly stated in the mission and values of the seminary? Are there other places within the official documents of the institution where that commitment can be found?

With analysis of the information gathered from these and other questions, the change team should be able to determine the level of support, awareness, and leadership available at the theological school before fully undertaking efforts for advancing racial/ethnic diversity. Also, change team members will be able to determine the best way to shape and implement concrete actions for change at their particular theological school.

4. *Assessment and benchmarking.* In this step, the change team organizes and presents the data to help all sectors of the seminary identify its current racial/ethnic developmental stage, helping them prioritize issues or problems the seminary needs to address and inviting them to develop a set of strategies to advance in the multicultural development continuum. What is critical in this stage is for the theological institution to be able "to name and own" its current developmental stage and to identify those things that need change and could presently be changed. The change team may use and combine different approaches for the dissemination of the information and to get feedback about what to do next (e.g., focus groups, campuswide forums, targeted interviews, etc.).

5. *Change planning and implementation.* The change team, in this step, identifies units or sectors within the seminary willing to start developing goals and strategies to move toward greater expressions of racial/ethnic diversity. At this point, it is important for the seminary to officially recognize the existence of the change team or whatever committee that may result from this process. Even if it is temporary, the change team or committee needs the full support of the power-holders of the seminary for the process to move forward. The hope is that eventually such a change team or committee will become a permanent part of the seminary so that continuous evaluation, renewing and reworking of the efforts for advancing racial/ethnic diversity, can be maintained over time.

MARED: An example of its implementation

In this section, I share my experience of trying to implement this model at my own theological institution during the last two years. I will point out the different steps of the process as they have been accomplished. I will also summarize some of the results that have come out of this experience.

Both participation in several professional conferences addressing concerns of racial/ethnic diversity in theological education and my own experiences as a member of a racial/ethnic group in a mostly white theological institution prompted me to think of ways of advancing racial/ethnic diversity at my own institution. Throughout the eight years I have been on the faculty at my seminary, I have done different things to raise awareness about the importance and need of racial/ethnic diversity in theological education. I have included content and readings in my own courses, and I have used different approaches to teaching to try to be sensitive to racial/ethnic students. I have been part of the faculty Intercultural Committee for several years. But still issues of diversity were not explicitly or intentionally addressed at the academic or institutional levels. I also learned some staff and students on campus had expressed concerns about issues of racial/ethnic diversity at the seminary. Therefore, during my sabbatical year (2005–2006), I developed a project to bring the conversation of racial/ethnic diversity to the entire institution.²² I presented a paper on racial/ethnic diversity in theological education and introduced the project during a faculty retreat in early fall 2006. Thus, it could be said, the sum of all of the above describes the first step of the process of MARED: the *generative event*.

The original plan was to persuade the Intercultural Committee to undertake the implementation of the project as one of its activities during the 2005–2006 academic year. After a couple of meetings during fall 2006, the committee decided to create a Multicultural Advisory Committee that could work on the project. We composed a list of students, staff, and faculty members who we thought would be willing to be part of that committee, and I personally contacted each. By January 2006, 85 percent of people on the list responded positively to the invitation to be part of the committee. The initial Multicultural Advisory Committee consisted of three members from the staff, three faculty members (including myself), and seven students representing white, African American, Asian American and other racial/ethnic groups within our student body. Dur-

ing spring 2006, we held three meetings to explain the project, to listen to questions and ideas about the implementation of the project, and to start bonding as a change team. Because of the importance of having power-holders somehow involved in this project, I requested from the dean an opportunity to talk with the Academic Affairs Committee of the board of trustees during its spring 2006 meeting. As a result, the trustees became aware of the project. Three of them explicitly asked to be informed about its development and were willing to participate in the project when possible. In this way we accomplished the second step of the process: *identifying and developing a change team*.

During spring 2006, the change team gathered information about where we were as a theological seminary in regard to issues of racial/ethnic diversity. We looked at the seminary's mission statement, strategic plan, academic programs, lists of courses, and campus life to see how we were addressing issues of racial/ethnic diversity. An encouraging list was developed of things we were already doing. The committee began to fulfill step three of MARED's process: *determining our seminary's readiness and climate*. But also from the committee (change team) emerged the realization that we were not doing all we could be doing. We saw our seminary in a fluid stage of *compliance*, mixed with characteristics of the Club Seminary as well as of the Affirming Seminary. With this realization, we moved on to step four, that of *assessment and benchmarking*. It became clear to the committee that a significant number of people at our seminary were ready to get involved in a broader collective effort to continue with step four of the process. To that end, we developed a "three-stage workshop" component of the project. It is outside the scope of this paper to describe the different tasks and processes involved in planning and implementing this component of step four, but the appendix outlines the project and offers a general idea of what it involved, even though some modifications were made by the change team. What is important for the purpose of this paper is to summarize the outcomes of its execution.

First, participation surpassed the expectations. More than fifty students, nine staff members, and twelve faculty members (one third of the total number), including the dean and associate dean, participated. Students responsible for different official committees of the students' general assembly took part in the workshops. It was clear that there were issues of concern among the students in regard to different kinds of diversity on campus and racial/ethnic diversity in particular. Different individuals from all sectors expressed, in oral and written forms, some of their concerns and why they welcomed the efforts behind the workshops.

Second, beyond the workshops themselves, there were additional opportunities for other students, staff, and faculty members to converse more freely about issues of diversity on campus. Particularly helpful were the informal conversations with the external consultant during her visit to our campus during the third workshop. She talked with a number of students and had conversations with the dean of students, the director of student life, and the dean of faculty. She also met with staff members of the admissions office. Finally, she held a lunch-hour session where more than fifteen people attended, including two faculty members who could not participate in any stages of the workshop.

Third, although the Multicultural Advisory Committee (change team) is not yet an official committee, it continues to work under the umbrella of the Intercultural Committee. After working together in the planning, organizing, and implementing of the three-stage workshop, the interest of the fifteen-member change team continues to be high. Regular meetings were held on campus throughout the 2007–2008 academic year to organize conversations on “stories of diversity.” One could say there is a capital of “group-dynamics and knowledge” around issues of racial/ethnic diversity that has been created as a result of the work of this committee.

Fourth, there is a wealth of data gathered from students, staff, and faculty who participated in the three-stage workshop process. They offered valuable critiques and insights regarding things we need to change in order to become a more consistent Affirming Seminary, which hopefully, will lead to our becoming a Redefining Seminary. All this information has been systematized and shared with the new seminary president and the dean of faculty as we move into the process of a new strategic plan and a curriculum review. Depending on what we do with this information, as we engage in the new strategic planning and curriculum review efforts under the new president, we have a real chance to begin to fulfill step five of MARED’s process: *change planning and implementation*.

Fifth, during a fall 2007 workshop, five faculty members from three different departments discussed issues of racial/ethnic diversity in the classroom and its implications for syllabus construction. They all presented to the dean their revised syllabi by the end of spring 2008. In addition, during spring 2008, a team of three students worked on a project to create a permanent space for formal and informal conversations on issues of diversity on campus, church, and society. More than fifty people participated in three of the events they organized.

Finally, an African American scholar was appointed last year as the new president of our institution, the first ever within our denomination. Certainly, it would be too pretentious to affirm that the appointment was a direct result of such efforts, but given that at least one-third of the presidential search committee participated in the three-stage workshop process, it may be possible to attribute part of the credit to the MARED process.

It is now clear that there is a significant group of students, staff, and faculty convinced of the need for our seminary to pay serious attention to issues of diversity in general and racial/ethnic diversity in particular. It is also clear that the seminary community wants to see actions taking place that will move us toward greater racial/ethnic diversity, that is, in more advanced stages of the racial/ethnic developmental continuum. It seems that the seminary is ready and has developed a good climate in which to move forward. Assessment and benchmarking have begun to take place. The challenge for the seminary now is to engage in more sustained and intentional efforts for planning institutional change, which will help us advance toward greater racial/ethnic diversity in our mission, policies, academic programs, and community life.

Conclusion

The challenges of racial/ethnic diversity for theological education will not go away. Rather, they will become more urgent and poignant because of the pressures and demands of the sociocultural conflictive realities of the world in which we live. And hopefully, those pressures and demands will bring about, willingly or unwillingly, a critical revision of the Euro-centric, mostly white theological, pastoral, and educational patterns that have dominated theological schools in North America. Whether as a concern for greater social inclusion or a prophetic concern for greater social justice in the church and society, theological institutions have an imperative to improve and expand their efforts to achieve racial/ethnic diversity, with its inherent connections to race and racism. From a theological perspective, Mark Taylor reminds us “what we need today are antiracism practices and beliefs, in theological and other discourses, that move beyond philanthropy, gradualism, and accommodation to the fears of the powerful.”²³ From the educational and pastoral perspective, Aleshire and Boyd remind us that:

If theological schools are going to succeed in the new century in North America, we will need to be broadly inclusive of racial/ethnic constituencies, and that will require new institutional effort and skill. If we are going to succeed, we need to become more competent educators of white students who need to understand and learn how to serve in multiracial and transcultural contexts. We must be able to educate students of color for leadership both within racial/ethnic communities and for growing multiracial communities.²⁴

MARED, as a model for advancing racial/ethnic diversity in theological education, could prove helpful to generating the reflection and actions necessary to respond to these theological, educational, and pastoral challenges. I believe that within all theological institutions there are people truly committed to issues of social inclusion and social justice. My hope is that they will be willing to try the model and improve it for the sake of the present and future of theological education and the life and mission of the church in a beautifully diverse and yet conflictive world. Those in positions of power in theological institutions need to be willing to make decisions about whether they want to embrace fully racial/ethnic diversity as something central to their mission.

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Appendix

Three-Stage Workshop Model for Advancing Racial/Ethnic Diversity at Union-PSCE

PROPOSAL ABSTRACT: This project consists of a series of three educational opportunities for a self-selected group of faculty (8–10), staff (5–7), students (10–15), and board members (3–5) at Union-PSCE to intentionally read about, reflect upon, and decide on issues of multicultural diversity as they apply to its academic and institutional life. The twofold purpose of the project is to train a representative group from Union-PSCE's community in fundamental concepts and practices of multicultural diversity and to generate the conditions to establish institutional and academic policies that could move Union-PSCE to become a more effective multicultural theological institution.

Project outline and design

The overall design of the project involves work throughout two academic years that will include the following:

Academic year 2005–2006

1. Project director will present the project to the Intercultural Committee and review the goals and methodology of the project with chairs of the Intercultural Committee and the Community Committee.
2. Project director will work closely with the advisory committee to start thinking about multicultural diversity in theological education and to start planning the workshops for the next academic year.
3. Project director will work throughout the year planning and selecting activities and resources for the implementation of the three-stage workshop. This will include the creation of an online module for stage II of the workshop.

Academic year 2006–2007

1. Cultural Diversity Workshop: Stage I
 - a. Duration: 4 hours
 - b. Place and Date: Union-PSCE campus; November 2, 2006
 - c. Responsible: project director and advisory committee
 - d. Theme: Getting the facts, knowing the theories for understanding the reality of racial/ethnic diversity in theological education.
2. Cultural Diversity Workshop: Stage II (November and December 2006, January 2007)
 - a. Duration: 8–12 hours for faculty and staff, 15–20 hours for students
 - b. Place: Online. Project director will monitor the individual and group work
 - c. Theme: Deepening on the theories and discerning particular strategies related to the particular roles of faculty, staff and students
3. Cultural Diversity Workshop: Stage III
 - a. Duration: 4 hours
 - b. Place: Union-PSCE campus, February 15, 2007
 - c. Responsible: project director with advisory committee
 - d. Theme: How can Union-PSCE become a more effective multicultural theological institution?

ENDNOTES

1. In addition to racial/ethnic diversity, other forms of diversity (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, theological/religious traditions, age, etc.) share common concerns, affect one another, and therefore deserve attention in the context of theological education. They all are part of a person's multidimensional identity and intersect with a person's cultural identity as part of a larger group (e.g., white Anglo Saxon, African Caribbean, etc.).
2. The percentage of enrollment comprising racial/ethnic students has grown from about 5.8 percent in 1977 to 22.6 percent in 2007. These numbers exclude students who are in North America on visas, many of whom are racial/ethnic students. With the addition of those students, racial/ethnic and visa enrollment reached 33 percent in 2007. See ATS 2007–08 Annual Data Tables, Table 2.12 at <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Documents/AnnualDataTables/2007–08AnnualDataTables.pdf>. See also <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/PapersPresentation/Aleshire/Documents//2008/CAOS-GiftsDifferingPPT.pdf>.
3. For fall 2004, the percentages of racial/ethnic faculty in ATS schools in comparison to U.S. higher education in general was reported by Daniel Aleshire, respectively, as follows: 0.2 percent vs. 0.5 percent Native American, 5.1 percent vs. 6.2 percent Asian, 3.9 percent vs. 3.0 percent Hispanic, 7.6 percent vs. 5.1 percent African American, and 17.8 percent vs. 18.1 percent for all ethnic/racial groups. See <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/PapersPresentation/Aleshire/Documents/2008/CAOS-GiftsDifferingPPT.pdf>.
4. In ATS schools between 2003 and 2007, of those who reported ethnicity, African American faculty grew from 6.09 to only 6.34 percent, Asian or Pacific Islander from 3.80 to 5.05 percent, and Hispanic from 2.98 to 3.33 percent. Similarly among students who reported ethnicity, for the same period, African American enrollment grew from 10.35 to 11.09 percent, Asian or Pacific Islander declined slightly from 6.99 to 6.94 percent, and Hispanic grew from 3.64 to 4.14 percent. Today, white non-Hispanic faculty represent approximately 83 percent of all full-time theological faculty, and they also represent the primary racial/ethnic composition of 87 percent of all ATS member institutions. See Table 3.1-A, Table 2.12-A, and Table 1.3 of the ATS Annual Data Tables at www.ats.edu/2007–08 Annual Data Tables.
5. For instance, for fall 2007, the percentage of student enrollment from the three larger racial/ethnic groups in comparison to the percentage of those groups in the larger population of the United States and Canada is estimated by Daniel Aleshire, respectively, as follows: 7.0 percent vs. 4.8 percent Asian Americans and Asian descent; 10.8 percent vs. 11.9 percent African Americans and African descent; 4.2 percent vs. 13.8 percent Hispanic/Latino/a. Asian or Pacific Islander is the only racial/ethnic group that mirrors the demographics of the larger society in both student enrollment and faculty at ATS schools. See <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/PapersPresentations/Aleshire/Documents/2008/CAOS-GiftsDifferingPPT.pdf> (accessed September 18, 2008).
6. Michael Gilligan, "Diversity and Accreditation: A Measure of Quality," *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002): 9.
7. Daniel Aleshire and Marsha Foster Boyd, "ATS Work on Race and Ethnicity," *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002): v.
8. Paradoxically, this situation is creating a double competition, first, among the few "qualified" minorities to get the spaces available (whether as a seminary student or a faculty member) and, second, among theological institutions to attract students and faculty from racial/ethnic minorities in order to diversify their student body and faculty composition.

9. Mark K. Taylor, "Celebrating Difference, Resisting Domination: The Need for Synchronic Strategies in Theological Education," in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, ed. Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 267.
10. Critics of racism in theological education have come mostly from black voices (e.g., James Cone) and feminist voices (e.g., Rosemary R. Ruether). For more recent voices, see James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and other references to Mark Taylor in this paper. See also Laurie M. Cassidy and Alexander Mikulich, eds., *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).
11. MCOD was developed by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman. For the most recent explanation of this model see Bailey W. Jackson, "The Theory and Practice of Multicultural Organization Development in Education," in *Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Departmental and Institution Change in Higher Education*, ed. Mathew L. Ouellett (Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, 2005), 1–21.
12. For instance, General Institutional Standard 2, section 2.5, "Institutional Integrity," established by the ATS Commission, reads: "Integrity in theological education includes institutional and educational practices that promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America. Schools shall seek to enhance participation of persons of racial/ethnic minorities in institutional life. According to its stated purpose, the school shall seek to address the concerns of women and to increase their participation in theological education. In all cases, schools shall seek to assist students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings."
13. See the report of a five-year study of twelve theological institutions by David A. Roozen, Alice Frazer Evans, and Robert A. Evans, *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Globalization and Theological Education* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research, 1996), 19–81.
14. See Elizabeth Lynn and Barbara G. Wheeler, *Missing Connections: Public Perceptions of Theological Education and Religious Leadership*, Auburn Studies, no. 6 (New York, NY: Auburn Theological Seminary, September 1999).
15. I am aware of other factors that hinder change that are not directly related with faculty. As has been pointed out by Roozen, Evans, and Evans in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach*, "... seminaries tend to (1) value reflection and analysis over action in their praxis, (2) have cumbersome and 'untimely' accountability processes, and (3) have diffuse power and decision-making structures. But the 'conserving' nature of religion tends to exacerbate seminaries' resistance to change, as does the extraordinarily high demand on seminary faculty time, and the strained financial situation of much of theological education today," 17–18.
16. Ann I. Morey, "Organizational Change and Implementation Strategies for Multicultural Infusion" in *Multicultural Course Transformation in Higher Education: A Broader Truth*, eds. Ann I. Morey and Margie K. Kitano (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 268.
17. Edward Farley, "Why Seminaries Don't Change: A Reflection on Faculty Specialization," *Christian Century* 114, no. 5 (February 5–12, 1997): 133–143.
18. For further reflection on the central role of dialogue in social transformation, see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1970), 76–81.
19. Bailey Jackson, "The Theory and Practice of Multicultural Organization Development in Education," 9.

20. Ibid., 9–11.

21. Ibid., 15.

22. I was able to develop this project thanks to a grant from the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion, after participating in their first colloquy on “Teaching and Learning in Racial/Ethnic Diverse Classrooms,” which started July 2004 and ended July 2005.

23. Mark Taylor, “Race and Racist Regime: Challenges for Anti-racist Theological Work” (paper presented at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, VA, January 26, 2006), 5.

24. Aleshire and Boyd, “ATS Work on Race and Ethnicity”: vi.

Crafting Theological Research

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ABSTRACT: This essay amplifies the criteria for developing theological research proposals outlined in the Lilly Theological Research Grants program. Those writing such proposals are encouraged to ask four questions: (1) How does the project illuminate our understanding and experience of God's presence and action in the world? (2) To what extent does the project re-enact, even trigger, the dynamic interaction between faith and understanding? (3) How does the proposal address, inform, or challenge ecclesial consciousness or ecclesial identity? (4) How does the project shape, inform, or challenge specific Christian practices? Crafting theological proposals often meets resistance in surprising ways and thus requires sustained energy, lively imaginations, and moral courage.

Introduction

As a biblical scholar, I like to begin with a text, and having read the text, to expound it. But my choice of text is not a biblical passage but rather an excerpt from the Lilly Theological Research Grants program materials. It should be familiar to every recipient of an ATS theological grant. It reads:

The [Lilly Theological Research Grants] program particularly encourages scholarly research that:

- contributes to theological education,
- informs the life of the church,
- develops a greater public voice for theology in society,
- collaborates with other academic disciplines, and
- offers new perspectives on Christianity in a pluralistic setting.¹

This carefully worded language has served the theological grants program well for several years—not only the program but theological education within North America. It has done so because it has raised consciousness about critically important ideas and values: theological education, the life of the church, the public voice of theology within society, interdisciplinary conversation and research, the pluralistic setting in which we all now work, and the possibility for expanding and deepening our understanding of the Christian enterprise.

The language of “new perspectives” implies that the Christian faith is a mystery capable of infinite probing. Such language holds out the possibility for fresh, illuminating knowledge, even if our research requires revisiting the old, retrieving aspects of the ancient tradition that have long lain dormant, and recasting the old in new form. But it also envisions the possibility for genuine creativity—for discovering, shaping, and formulating knowledge

that is incontestably new. Theological research, at its best, pushes us “toward the limits of intelligibility where one stands at the threshold of mystery.”²

Grant recipients are selected because they embody the high expectations expressed in this text. Writing a grant proposal is itself a creative act. It requires subtle skills of interpretation (knowing what is being asked for); rhetorical ability to describe, invite, and convince (knowing how to frame one’s research interests clearly and convincingly); and intellectual imagination (envisioning something that does not currently exist). When we write grant proposals, we ask the same questions we asked when we wrote our dissertations: Has this question been asked before? Is it a real rather than artificial question? Is it a worthwhile question? Is it answerable? Am I qualified to tackle it?

Convincing the selection committee that a proposal has the possibility of addressing the expectations of the ATS description only begins a process. The road from conception to execution is long and winding. Claiming that a research project is theological does not make it so. The true test comes as the project moves from dream to reality.

Pausing midway in our research to converse with other ATS grant recipients about what it actually means to “think theologically” is an exercise in theological praxis. This is an opportune time because it occurs during the birthing process, between one creative act—formulating the research proposal—and another creative act—executing the proposal. If the first stage is fraught with difficulties, the second stage is even more so. Such collaborative conversation reminds us, once again, of the inescapably social dimension of scholarly research. Even when we are alone reading and thinking, or sitting in front of our computer, we are engaged in conversation with other scholars.

How do we ensure that the project we imagine is actually carried out as an explicitly theological project? Four sets of questions can serve as criteria or norms that may guide us not only in formulating research projects but also in bringing them to completion.

Engaging the mystery of God

First, how does it illumine our understanding and experience of God’s presence and action in the world?

This first question may seem to state the obvious. Of course, an explicit theological research project must, in some sense, be about God. And yet, the obvious sometimes needs stating. As David Kelsey wrote in his 1992 monograph on theological education, *To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological About a Theological School?*:

What distinguishes a theological school is that the subject it seeks to understand truly is *theos*, God. However, God cannot be studied directly, as though God were immediately given like the page of a text. Nor can God be studied by controlled indirection the way, for example, subatomic particles, which also are not immediately given, can be studied indirectly under the conditions of controlled manipulation in the laborato-

ry. Therefore it is more accurate to say that what distinguishes a theological school is that it is a community that studies those matters which are believed to *lead* to true understanding of God.³

By appropriating Kelsey's last sentence, we can rephrase this criterion by asking: In what way(s) does the project actually *engage the mystery of God*?

Asking such questions of ourselves inevitably forces us to probe the experience of God that we bring to the project. In turn, this prompts us to explore, once again, alternative construals of God. One benefit of a theological research project is the opportunity for us to revisit scholarly debates that we may have encountered in seminary or graduate school. How are theology and religion related? Is religion the experiential domain in which humans encounter Ultimate Reality as *mysterium tremendum* in a manner characterized by spontaneity, life, creativity, energy, majesty, and power, as Joachim Wach argues?⁴ Or is it to be construed as an alternative to metaphysics, on the one hand, and ethics/morals, on the other hand, as Schleiermacher insists, and thus seen as "the sensibility and taste for the infinite"?⁵ What does Schleiermacher want to capture when he insists that "Religion's essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling"?⁶ Or is Clifford Geertz's definition of religion more compelling: "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in [humans] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."⁷

Is theology, by contrast, best understood as critical reflection on religious experience? And, if so, in what sense? As a constructive, systematic enterprise, expressed in the grand systems of Barth, Tillich, Rahner, Moltmann, or Panenberg? Or as a form of interpreting the life of faith, a "grammar of faith," as Paul Holmer, drawing on Wittgenstein, argues?⁸ Are we better off to work with a "grammatical" understanding of theology, one in which theology is best seen as "that skein of thought and language in which Christians understand themselves, the Bible, God, and their everyday world"?⁹ Or as that vision of God that "helps to redefine the human boundaries, to tame its vagrants, stimulate the indifferent, energize the slothful, and give scope and promise to all those who feel hedged in and even utterly defeated"?¹⁰

Whether we revisit the centuries-long debate over the respective domains of religion and theology and how they relate to each other or whether we engage classic construals of religion and theology, if we pass our research project through the sieve of a robustly conceived theory of religion or a magisterial theological vision that is foreign to us, not only does this intellectual journey expand our theological horizons, but it also has the potential for enriching our research projects, perhaps in surprising ways. Whatever form this intellectual dialogue takes, we launch this journey in order to engage the mystery of God, not simply to amplify our ways of thinking about God but to deepen our own experience of God. We make the journey because we think it has the prospect of leading us—and others—to a deeper understanding of God, and, by extension, to a more profound experience of God as Ultimate Reality.

Faith and understanding

Second, to what extent does the project reenact, even trigger, the dynamic interaction between faith and understanding? Does it involve us, as scholars, and our reader(s) in a deeper process of transcendent self-understanding? Does working on the project reflect the dynamics of theological self-understanding? In brief, how does the research project function as an act of faith?

For several years, the Pauline Theology Group within the Society of Biblical Literature struggled with how to think and talk about theology within the Pauline letters. Is theology the end product or result of Paul's thinking as he addresses various congregational issues in a particular letter? Or is it a process into which the Pauline letter provides us a window? Do the letters present us with a Pauline theological system or a lens through which we can watch a pastoral theologian at work?

In reading the published essays that arose out of these conversations, I became convinced that Victor Paul Furnish was right in inviting us to read the Pauline letters as concrete instances of Paul doing theology rather than as writings that contain the deposit of his thought.¹¹ Especially persuasive is Furnish's insistence that theological reflection entails *critical engagement*:

In Western Christianity since the Enlightenment, the fundamental task of theology has been understood to be *critical reflection* about this one God, whose reality is unsurpassable and from whom all other realities derive their existence and their meaning. This task is appropriately extended to include critical reflection about all beliefs and rites in which particular understandings of God's reality come to expression, and about the social structures within which those beliefs and rites are continued and interpreted.¹²

Furnish acknowledges his indebtedness to his colleague Schubert Ogden, who distinguishes three modes of theology: (1) historical theology, by which Ogden means all Christian witness that has *already* occurred, and that has been decisive for human existence; (2) systematic theology, that focuses on the present and asks, "What is the Christian witness of faith as decisive for human existence?"; and (3) practical theology, whose distinctive task is to embody current construals of Christian witness in concrete forms, whether individual or institutional. Practical theology thus asks, "What should the Christian witness of faith *now become* as decisive for human existence?"¹³

Ogden is especially insistent that the indispensable, if not the defining, element of theology is *critical reflection*. Not every Christian word or deed deserves to be called theology, even when done in the name of Christ. Christian proclamation and action might qualify as *witness*, but not necessarily as *theology*, for the latter entails critical engagement in a way that the former does not. In making this distinction, Ogden is reminding us that it is one thing to make theological claims, another to validate them. We can construct theological proposals, but will others find them credible and compelling? Ogden pushes us

to ask what meaningful validation would entail. Among other things, it means testing them with well-established intellectual criteria that are shared by a broader circle of reflective believers: the so-called rational criteria, such as historical verifiability, logical consistency, and intellectual coherence. But also included are other criteria that relate to the world of human experience, ranging from aesthetic judgments to psychological-emotional depth. A formal theological claim or proposal can be subjected to critical judgment just as a dramatic production can be evaluated by a theater critic or a literary work judged by a literary critic. Properly evaluated, a theological claim can be judged “good, bad, or ugly.”

When we propose to speak authoritatively, or even provocatively, about God or the things of God, or to engage in thinking and writing that, in Kelsey’s words, propose to *lead* others to a deeper understanding of God, we can expect our proposals to be subjected to critical scrutiny: Is it historically accurate? logically compelling? internally coherent? But we can also expect to be asked, Is it experientially compelling? Does it connect with human experience understood at its many levels of complexity? Or does the proposal skate on the surface of human experience with naïve artificiality that borders on the absurd?

Within New Testament studies, the vineyard within which I work, scholars have long known that not all theological proposals are created equal, *not even within the New Testament*, or perhaps, *especially within the New Testament*. More than a century ago (1897), William Wrede offered one of the most devastating critiques of New Testament theology ever written.¹⁴ Insisting that the discipline of New Testament theology must be a thoroughly historical enterprise, Wrede lashed out against the efforts of his notable contemporaries, including B. Weiss, Beyschlag, Holtzmann, and Schleiermacher. He criticized their shallow grasp of “doctrine” as reflected in the New Testament writings, their obsession with organizing various New Testament doctrines into neatly conceived systems of thought, and their encyclopedic cataloging of biblical references in support of their doctrinal systems. Rather than grasping the truly distinctive elements of a particular author or writing, or what Wrede calls “the special character of early Christian ideas and perceptions, sharply profiled” — what is theologically cogent—he charges that his contemporaries mistook encyclopedic comprehensiveness for insight.¹⁵ Thus emerged his memorable characterization of New Testament theology as “the science of minutiae and insignificant nuances.”¹⁶

No one saw more clearly than Rudolf Bultmann the need to clarify precisely what theological reflection actually entails. Like Wrede, he recognized how easily systematized formulations of theological statements taken from the New Testament (e.g., from the writings of Paul) could be equated with, or even substituted for, the underlying power of Paul’s gospel. No matter how carefully a theologian reports Paul’s theological sentiments, Bultmann insists that one must distinguish between kerygmatic and theological statements. In the former, we hear the pristine Word of God echo in our ears as the gospel works its magic on our hearts. These kerygmatic statements may be brief and formulaic or somewhat elaborated, but they must be distinguished from those, usually longer, theological statements that explicate or amplify the kerygma.

More important than distinguishing the two is to understand how the kerygma awakens within us “faith’s understanding” as we hear God’s compelling Word summon us to decision in our own concrete situation. It is not the theological formulations themselves, however memorable or powerful, be they Paul’s or John’s words, to which we commit ourselves. For if we understand faith as committing ourselves to theological formulations, however normative, we thereby objectify such language and empty faith of its vital, dynamic content. Rather, it is the reality, the event, even the Person, to which the proclamation of the gospel bears witness, and which theological statements amplify, that constitutes the core of faith. And through this encounter emerges a new awareness of God and the world that transforms our own self-understanding, and thus produces a new awareness of ourselves. “Theological thoughts,” Bultmann insists, must

be conceived and explicated as thoughts of faith . . . as thoughts in which faith’s understanding of God, the world, and [humans] is unfolding itself. Theological propositions—even those of the New Testament—can never be the object of faith; they can only be the explication of the understanding which is inherent in faith itself.¹⁷

By making these distinctions and repeatedly reminding us that the language of faith, be it the primal language of preaching and confession or the secondary reflective language of theological explication, Bultmann points us to something even more primal: our encounter with God as experienced through the proclamation of the crucified Christ. In this encounter emerges a new level of self-awareness that results from a newly revealed understanding of God and the world. But the new self can never be an objectified self, just as God and the world as revealed through the gospel of Christ cannot be objectified, much less equated with theological statements about them. What theological language does, when properly understood, is to name the underlying reality of faith, even as it gives voice to “faith’s understanding.”

Research projects that are predicated on such construals of faith, that respect the distinction between primal faith language (i.e., kerygmatic language) and second-order theological language, and that participate in, if not reenact, the hermeneutical process through which believers experience new levels of understanding through their encounter with the Christian gospel, justly deserve the label *theological*.

Ecclesial Consciousness

Third, how does the proposal address, inform, or challenge ecclesial consciousness, or ecclesial identity?

By *ecclesial consciousness* and *ecclesial identity* I do not mean “church” in a narrow sense, especially in the sense in which it is used when it is paired with “academy.” The sharp distinction often made between church and academy is a false polarity. If we ask whether a research project is geared primarily toward

the church or the academy, we usually mean: is it primarily targeted toward people who relate to churches in some way (ministers, seminary students, or parishioners), or, is it directed primarily toward people related to colleges and universities, usually, professors and students in such institutions, or to the persons comprising the scholarly guilds organized around academic disciplines?

But this distinction is difficult to sustain in any meaningful sense. Many academic settings, be they colleges, universities, but especially seminaries, have explicit ecclesial roots or affiliations. Their ethos is often conspicuously ecclesial. This is especially the case with freestanding seminaries or schools of theology that have clear denominational affiliations. But it is also true of most university-based schools of theology, even those whose denominational affiliation was once clear and strong but, for whatever reason, is now mostly titular. This vast network of schools, many of which are members of The Association of Theological Schools, comprises a large segment of the academy. A prodigious amount of hard scholarship, which embraces a wide range of academic disciplines, all the way from history to philosophy, is produced in such academic settings. Writings from these ecclesial academies are published not only by denominational presses and scholarly journals located in such settings but also by a wide array of university presses, trade presses, and commercial publishers.

And even in college and university settings that house departments of religion or religious studies, often state-sponsored academic settings, ecclesial presence is felt. The academy in such settings may be avowedly secular and nonconfessional, but it is scarcely insulated or isolated from ecclesial consciousness. Many faculty in such settings may be proudly nonreligious, irreligious, or antireligious, but some faculty in such settings are either openly religious or “closet believers.” If by academy we mean persons in the former category, it is a relatively small subset of the professoriate, at least within North America. And, of course, the distinction between church and academy is even less accurate in certain European settings, most notably Germany, but even in the United Kingdom to some extent.

Consequently, to judge whether a research project is explicitly theological by asking whether it is addressed primarily to the church or to the academy is of limited value.

But it is helpful to inquire whether, or in what ways, the proposal fosters, redefines, expands, or reshapes ecclesial consciousness or identity. Several questions are worth asking.

In what sense does “church” inform the project?

To use the language of ATS, how does the project inform the life of the church? Is its primary focus congregational, denominational, or broadly universal or catholic in scope? While these senses of church are not mutually exclusive, the theological implications of a project may differ widely, depending upon the view of church that informs it. Local congregations have become the focus of intense research over the last two to three decades, benefiting immensely from sophisticated use of sociological, anthropological, and ethnographic methods of analysis. We are now more keenly aware of the complex variety of congregations within the broader spectrum of religious life, not only

in North America, but globally. If anything, the rich possibilities for theological research offered by congregational life are just beginning to be realized.

Similar challenges exist for theological research directed toward denominational life. Major shifts in the configuration of mainline Protestant denominations have created new, urgent theological research agendas. The same can be said for Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. As some denominations continue to struggle with issues of confessional identity, others have experienced renewed energy in exploring ecumenical conversations. Whether the conversation is intramural or extramural in scope and content, lively theological research and dialogue remains a desideratum.

How does the project relate ecclesial consciousness to the religious pluralism that characterizes twenty-first century life?

Interfaith dialogue must now occur in conjunction with interreligious dialogue. Christian theologians must now engage in serious, sustained conversation with theologians and religious leaders from other religious traditions, not only the sister traditions of Judaism and Islam, but West and South Asian traditions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism.

Christian theology faces a special challenge in addressing what ecclesial consciousness now means in this environment. It must now ask, In what ways can Christian teaching foster an authentic sense of human community? How does faithful affirmation of one religious tradition honor devout expressions of religion in other traditions? How can vigorous fidelity to one religious tradition be respected? How can different religious communities coexist peacefully, and how can each religious tradition contribute to the alleviation of strife, the elimination of violence, and the increase of mutual understanding?

Does the project give explicit attention to how ecclesial consciousness fosters public citizenship?

The role of the church, understood in its broadest sense, within the public sphere warrants intentional theological research. Scholarly interest in public theology has flourished in recent decades, primarily in response to the sense that theology can, and must, address social and political issues that dominate the public sphere. Victor Anderson's apt remarks invite us to rethink the church's role within the public sphere:

Public theology reflects on the paradoxical relations that circumscribe the place and functions of religion in public life. Therefore, it does not rest easy with any public/private distinction that might conceptually uncouple theological discourse from public discourse. Public theology recognizes that the internal languages that identify the doctrinal commitments and cultic practices of particular religious communities are, at the same time, cultural languages that render religious communities particular discursive sites for public discourse. That is, religious communities are distinctive locations where moral, social, cultural practices are theologically criticized and legiti-

mized through the apparatuses of doctrine, liturgy, and organization. In these communities of discourse, the public function of theology may be prophetic, calling into question public acts that distort and disrupt effective communication of the common goods that persons require for social equilibrium and cultural fulfillment. However, it may also exercise a priestly function when the rich resources of doctrine, piety, and organization enable the public realm to flourish in peace.¹⁸

Questions worth addressing in this regard include: How does the church develop a public voice within society? Does the project contribute to the church's public witness within the larger society? In what ways do the ecclesial sphere and the public sphere overlap, interact, or compete with each other?

Impact on Christian practices

A fourth consideration relates practical effects: How does the project shape, inform, or challenge specific Christian practices?

If we can distinguish among attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, this criterion speaks mainly to the third item: behaviors. Whether, by doing so, we move to the realm of Christian ethics depends on how we construe ethics or where we locate it within the spectrum of theological disciplines. Using Ogden's framework mentioned earlier, we would be talking about practical theology: What should the Christian witness of faith *now become* as decisive for human existence? Either way, our concern here is Christian *praxis*.

This criterion works best when we operate with a "thick definition" of Christian practices. A good starting point is Dykstra and Bass: "[A practice consists of] a sustained, cooperative pattern of human activity that is big enough, rich enough, and complex enough to address some fundamental feature of human existence."¹⁹

By highlighting "some fundamental feature of human existence," Dykstra and Bass call our attention to practices that address or arise out of "ultimate concerns," to use Tillich's language.²⁰ This would suggest that some practices are trivial, while others are substantial. This does not necessarily translate into a distinction between nonserious and serious, or between playful and nonplayful. What we normally think of as practices performed during leisure as opposed to those performed at work, whether they include attending cultural events, such as the theater, museum exhibits, symphony performances, sporting events, going to the movies, or watching TV, certainly address "fundamental features of human existence." Our desire to experience truth through art in its various forms stems from one of the most fundamental human impulses. Our need to play (and rest) is equally central to meaningful human existence. Practices that relate to ultimate concerns may be ecclesial, but they may be broadly cultural.

"Sustained, cooperative patterns of human activity" suggest practices that occur over time. If they occur in patterns of regularity, they may even become ritual practices. If so, they become habitual. "Cooperative" suggests practices in which humans jointly engage—community practices, if you will. But surely

practices that individuals perform in isolation—private practices—must also be included, even if the structure and rhythm of such practices are shared by others. Whether prayer is private or corporate, it certainly qualifies as a practice in this thick sense.

Whether we think of this criterion as practical or ethical, it clearly intends us to ask whether our project will actually have an impact on what people *do*, not just what they think, or even what they believe, but how they behave. How will it affect the behavior of an individual? Will one be more inclined to exclude or embrace another, to borrow a phrase from Miroslav Volf?²¹ But how will it inform the way individuals form communities? Will those communities be heterogeneous or homogenous? And will the behaviors of those communities be socially constructive or destructive? And what about institutional structures that arise out of those communities or that are formed independently of such communities—institutions with clearly established legal frameworks, organized as corporations, profit or nonprofit? How will the project speak to institutional behavior—business, educational, judicial, legislative, or civic practices? If our project has an explicit normative dimension, it might lead us to ask whether the “sustained, cooperative” practices that emerge from these settings are fair and just. Do they promote the human spirit or trample it? Do they inspire or depress? Do they promote the common good or feed individual greed?

This criterion moves us toward the normative, prompting us to ask whether individual and corporate practices are morally uplifting or humanly debilitating. William Sullivan reminds us in his introduction to *Educating Clergy* that theological education, because of its sustained attention to normative questions, has much to offer other forms of professional education.²² This study, edited by a team of scholars led by Charles Foster, distinguishes three strands of professional education: cognitive (intellectual), practical (skills), and normative (vocational).²³ While these three strands were once embodied within a single individual, the “master,” who served as a mentor to the novice, be it physician, lawyer, or minister, they are now embodied within the educational enterprise—law school, medical school, or theological school. The challenge for both students and teachers in these educational institutions is to attend to each, given the special demands that have grown around them, and to integrate them into some meaningfully coherent pattern.

Sullivan observes that engineering education focuses heavily on the first two. In the early years of an engineer’s training, the emphasis is on learning “how the world works.” At a second stage, there’s a shift to learning “how to work in the world,” as engineers, usually in small groups, learn to apply their knowledge to practical tasks. The third dimension, the normative—“how to *be* in the world”—however, is less fully developed, and in some cases nonexistent.²⁴ This is precisely the dimension of professional formation that theological education has explored rigorously.

Research projects that consciously attend to the normative dimensions of human life, that ask hard questions about the relationship between beliefs and behaviors, and that explore the complex interrelationships between what people think and what they do, may rightly be called theological in the best sense. It has long been recognized that the task of theology is unfinished until

it addresses questions of human behavior and asks whether the patterns of human behavior that arise from our belief systems display genuine integrity, whether, in other words, these practices honor or distort, celebrate or debase, the mystery of God.

Conclusion

To craft research that is explicitly theological requires energy, imagination, and courage. Not only is this true in settings where we would expect resistance to theologically normative claims—among religion’s “cultured despisers”—but also in settings where we would least expect it—among churches and their duly authorized educational institutions: schools of theology, schools of divinity, and seminaries.

Crafting theological research calls for uncommon energy to overcome the inertia that besets many theological institutions. The sources of this inertia are manifold: an inherent conservatism that clings to old, established theological visions and the structures they have bred; fondness for the familiar that borders on idolatry; myopic ecclesiologies that refuse to experience, much less embrace, the rich, textured history and culture of the universal church; and cozy relationships with constituents that foster self-interests rather than interests that transcend individuals and institutions and look instead to the common good of the wider church.

Imagination, the most precious gift to be found among theological schools, and hence their most valuable resource, is also required. Schleiermacher reminds us that “belief in God depends on the direction of the imagination . . . [and] imagination is the highest and most original element in us.”²⁵ To engage in theological imagination requires us to travel through the world of language, and, as we travel, to look for metaphors that have the potential for becoming deep metaphors, which are capable of altering, even transforming, the way we see and experience the world. At this deep, imaginative level, we become artists, sketching outlines at first, then gradually filling in these outlines with fuller landscapes, or portraits, or pages. And here we experience creativity in its purest form—fashioning something genuinely new, even if it is some form of the old that we have refashioned. Theological research is often stillborn, not through lack of energy, but through failure of the imagination; not because genuinely new ideas do not want to be born but because we fail in our role of imaginative midwives in bringing them to birth.

Crafting theological research also requires courage, because it means confronting antitheological bias in its many forms. Contempt for theology was often heard in the decades-old debate between religious studies and theological studies, especially within North America. Strident antitheological rhetoric also figured in the recent rupture between the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. The culture of our professional guilds, as currently configured or as projected into the future, often masks a pervasive antitheological bias, which is neither easily detected nor easily overcome.

Antitheological bias can surface in surprising places. Denominational publishing houses, often under pressure from economic forces to reach the

widest possible audience, sometimes actively resist book titles with explicit theological language. And authors find themselves having to argue for creative, provocative theological titles. We can find ourselves having to fight for an explicitly theological agenda, even within circles in which the legitimacy of theology and theological language should be assumed rather than contested. Doing so requires us to argue against the grain. It also means that we have to negotiate competing interests, even financial interests. Under pressure, we may find ourselves reverting to nontheological language as a convenient default. But if our vocation as theologians means anything, it surely must mean holding out for the very language that sustains us and for the convictions that drive our teaching and research enterprise. Which is why crafting explicitly theological research proposals requires sustained energy, lively imaginations, and moral courage.

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ENDNOTES

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Theoretical Perspectives on Integrative Learning

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ABSTRACT: One often hears the term integration when theological educators describe best practices for teaching ministerial theory and practice. Specifically, field education programs in ATS-affiliated institutions often claim to promote the integration of theory and practice. This article considers the theory based upon which one can build a field education on-campus experience that lives into the claim of integrative teaching.

Many theological schools' field education programs include an on-campus course. These courses take place in a wide range of structures, seek to meet a variety of goals, and use a number of different teaching techniques. What most have in common is a claim that they promote the integration of theory and practice for ministry. In other words, the courses seek to place students' classroom learning in conversation with their field experiences in such a way that deepens, consolidates, adds complexity, and generally enhances both.

The question of how to create a truly integrative course for students in experiential education for ministry draws upon distinct disciplines, ranging from theological education theory, to teaching for professional effectiveness, to ministerial leadership. Theological field education has analogs in other fields, such as the medical rotational internship, the business apprenticeship, and the clinical component of studies in psychology and social work.¹ There is reason to believe that the role of experiential education is a prevalent source of conversation and debate in professional schools other than seminaries, considering the findings of the most recent Carnegie study on legal education,² which point out a need to revisit the importance of experience in learning for legal practice. This article will describe and explore some key theoretical concepts that shed light on the conversation about which on-campus component can best accompany an integrative field education experience.

Education for professional effectiveness

Donald Schön and Chris Argyris dedicated much of their scholarly careers to understanding what education for the professions requires. Schön argues that a course on professional effectiveness, which he calls the *practicum*, goes further than technical training. Whereas he argues that technical training must be part of the practicum, professional education must also include instruction toward professional habits of thinking (learning to "think like a _____ [insert professional title here]") as well as disciplines for reflective practice throughout life.³ Argyris and Schön propose that this learning process is intertwined at every phase with experience and reflection upon it, setting forth the following four phases of learning for the professions:

1. The discovery/diagnosis of a problem.
2. The invention of a solution.
3. The production of a solution.
4. Monitoring the implementation in order to enhance effectiveness.

Argyris and Schön propose that this form of learning best takes place in a setting where risks are low⁴ and where instructors serve as coaches, helping students to move into more sophisticated ways of thinking about professional practice. One way in which they describe the achievement of a more sophisticated perspective on professional work is through their illustrations of Model I, versus Model II, thinking.⁵ The assumptions that guide Model I thinking include the following:

- It is a win/lose world.
- Rational thinking provides all the answers we need.
- Public testing of assumptions is intolerably risky.
- Everyone else thinks using Model I.

Model I thinking might best be described with this example: A student came to me after a conflict with her field education supervisor. She was responsible for the pastoral leadership of a group for seniors that had existed for many years before the student minister took on this role. The student made some significant changes to the group's meeting structure, and this displeased some of the group's members. Unsure of how to confront her, these members went to the pastor/supervisor. When the supervisor raised the issue with the student, she retorted, "But it's my group!" His reply: "No, it's God's group." Rather than engage in conversation with the supervisor, the student came to me with the expectation that I would intervene and correct the supervisor. One might call this a Model I reaction, where the student framed the experience in her mind as a contest that needed to be settled by an outside referee.

The assumptions that guide Model II thinking are as follows:

- Professionals should maximize valid information used to make decisions.
- They should maximize free choice.
- They should maximize personal responsibility for these choices.

To continue with the example stated previously, here is how I might advise the student who came to me with the issue with her supervisor if my hope was to help her to engage in Model II thinking: First, I would encourage her to have a conversation with her supervisor about what concerns he heard as well as with the group she was leading about their concerns, thus maximizing valid information. I would urge her to use her own judgment in considering how to engage these people, and I would also encourage her to give the seniors in the group a choice about what changes would and would not be made, thus encouraging free choice on as many levels as possible. Finally, I would urge the student to take responsibility for the changes she introduced to the group and to address the reactions these changes have caused.

As one can see through this example, Model II is not the opposite of Model I. Model I does create, however, a closed system of thinking where learning does not take place; students cannot effectively enter a professional world where new and unidentified problems arise constantly if their thinking is closed and they are unable to creatively generate new, sometimes risky, responses. Another way to describe the limitations of Model I is to consider the extent to which they prevent self-awareness. A student whose assumption about conflict is, "If I am right, you must be wrong," will not learn a great deal about how her decisions are being received. A student who blames others rather than exploring how he or she might be contributing to a dysfunctional situation loses the opportunity while in field education (or later in ministry, for that matter) to grow professionally through experience.

Schön writes that it is through the practicum that students develop a greater sophistication of thought. The practicum he studied and describes takes place in a school of architecture, where a number of students work at their own drafting tables on the same assignment, while a practitioner of architecture circulates and makes suggestions all can hear and appropriate. Schön defines the practicum as a virtual world, where professional problems are posed and answered in a setting where there are few or no risks to clients related to the students' experimentation. Schön writes that the practicum "stands in an intermediate space between the practice world, the 'lay' world of ordinary life, and the esoteric world of the academy."⁶

One might wonder, Why can the practicum not simply teach students how to handle professional problems? Why call upon students to invent solutions, rather than giving them the solutions and teaching them how to carry them out? The answer to this question is that so few of the situations professionals encounter in our complex, postmodern world have obvious or clear solutions.

In my own experience, I know that ministry students often want "the answer" from their instructors: How do I officiate a baptism or a wedding or a funeral? How do I counsel families, preach, and attend to the sick and dying? Of course, instructors must give students principles, practices, and advice about the techniques associated with each of these tasks, but none of them is so simple and two-dimensional that technique will be enough. Schön writes, "indeterminate zones of practice—uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict—escape the canons of technical rationality."⁷ Nearly every situation in which a minister finds herself or himself could be considered just such an indeterminate zone of practice.

Argyris and Schön argue that a "coaching" style of teaching from an experienced professional is most effective at providing students with techniques, cognitive apprenticeship (e.g., "think like a _____"), and disciplines of reflective practice. Consider the example presented earlier where a student was in conflict with her supervisor. I coached her when I encouraged her to maximize information, present choices to those whom she was leading, and take responsibility for her choices. Her supervisor would have been a more effective coach had he encouraged the women in the prayer group to speak to the student minister directly, and if he had urged the student to speak with her constitu-

ents rather than speaking on their behalf. Coaching does more than help the leader/teacher to avoid triangulation. It empowers students to take control of their learning without depriving them of mentoring and sound advice based in experience.

Schön writes that, although it is not fully known exactly what coaches need to do to succeed in their preparation of students, certain attributes of coaching appear to be especially effective. He writes that the coach must not subsume his or her experience into the student's; even if the dilemma the student presents is utterly familiar to the practitioner/coach, the coach must not project an agenda or right answer onto the situation. Instead, the coach should "buil[d] up a *repertoire* of examples, images, understandings, and actions"⁸ to share with students as guiding images. Schön further argues that the coach should balance showing students new approaches with telling them how to proceed; this serves as a reminder that both Model I and Model II thinking must be present; whereas, reflective practice is the ultimate goal, technical knowledge cannot be overlooked or forgotten.

Finally, perhaps the most difficult task in which the coach must engage is remaining nondefensive in the face of students' anxiety. Argyris and Schön give detailed accounts of the appropriate way to offer students feedback in the midst of a reflective practicum, which follows these steps:

1. Ask the student how he believes he performed in the professional setting.
2. Ask others in the group about their perspective on the student's performance and his self-analysis.
3. If the student and his peers agree on basic principles, then the student will be encouraged that he is able to read situations correctly.
4. If there is disagreement, then "[t]he issues are then discussed until either the actor alters his evaluation, the others alter their evaluation, or all agree that no agreement is possible without further information."⁹

The authors point out how essential a safe and trusting environment is to this level of engagement with students. Trust is crucial because a defensive reaction on the part of students is to be expected; therefore, it is all the more important that instructors are nonreactive in the face of student anxiety. Stated in another way, instructors have two choices when their students in a reflective practicum become anxious that the instructor cannot provide clear-cut answers and that their performance is under scrutiny and critique. The first option would be for the instructor to feign having the answer in order to release the pressure the anxious student feels—to honor the self-sealing nature of Model I thinking and provide an easy resolution. The second option is for the instructor to remain calm, giving the student an opportunity to develop new skills for reflection over defensiveness.

Schön writes that students sense a loss of control when they are in the space of the reflective practicum. The leader of the group must make an effort to allow that anxiety to find resolution without telling students exactly what do to or how to think about a professional experience. Much like a coach who

gives the athlete new strategies without actually putting on a uniform and carrying the ball for the athlete, the instructor in practicum must send the student “back onto the field” to try new approaches. Therefore, problem-solving is not possible, but equipping is essential.

Schön and Argyris put forth a model for a reflective practicum that bears much resemblance to field education courses at a number of ATS-affiliated seminaries. They offer clear instruction to coaches in the setting and propose a clear method for fostering learning for effective professional practice in that educational context. One must wonder, therefore, why models like the practicum they propose are difficult to sustain, not just in seminaries but in all professional schools?

It is important to note that reflective practicum experiences are, in some seminary contexts, central to the curriculum and improving every year. That said, I have not yet met a field education director who would describe them as easy to manage, uncontroversial in their purported goals, and utterly supported by the entire seminary faculty. Even schools with the most functional and central practicum programs experience some of the frustrations lifted up by theorists related to occupying that liminal space between the academy and the world of professional practice.

Barriers to the reflective practicum

In the study of education for ministry, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and the Pastoral Imagination*, one reads that seminaries are discovering an ever-greater appreciation for the importance of integrative learning. In the beginning of the book, the authors state, “It is a truism that we become what we habitually do.”¹⁰ Throughout the book they quite nearly take for granted that experiential learning is utterly central to the experience of formation for ministry. One might consider it ironic that there is a separate chapter in *Educating Clergy* on theological field education. Rather than viewing experiential learning as one among many mechanisms through which one might learn about theology, religion, and ministry, it is treated as a discipline unto itself.

As the authors of *Educating Clergy* trace the history of seminary education, they connect the rise of theological field education with the advent of experiential learning in other professional fields. In short, they suggest that experience as a way of learning a profession needed to gain credibility in other professions before it was possible to experiment with it in seminaries. Although this is certainly arguable, I think it also important to recognize that, before Andover was founded as the first standalone postgraduate theological school two-hundred years ago, all of theological education in the United States was experience and integration: apprenticeship to a pastor and access to that pastor’s library. The *re*-discovery of experience as a potent method for delivering professional education might have had connections across fields, but it was also a homecoming in the theological world.

In their chapter on field education, Foster et al. lift up the unique role that directors of field education often play in seminaries, including “advocat[ing] for the world of ministry within seminary walls”; serving as “ambassadors of

the seminary to congregations, hospitals, and community agencies”; mediating between seminaries and denominational bodies; and taking upon themselves the “secret mission” of working with the faculty to help its members to bridge the cultures of abstract theology and the work of ministry.¹¹ Considering these crucial tasks, the authors close this chapter by musing on—but not seeking to answer—these questions: If field education is the location of integrative learning, and the importance of integration is becoming more and more broadly appreciated, why are so few professors involved in field education? The authors further wonder, If contextual education is the future of seminary learning, why do so few new faculty hires reflect a value for contextual ability or interests?

Why might it be that seminaries so often relegate field education to the periphery of the seminary curriculum, even as their internal leaders (faculties, deans, presidents) and external constituents (judicatory leaders, churches who hire seminary graduates) appear to agree that experiential learning is essential to seminary education? This second-class status likely has deep roots in a well-documented hierarchy of disciplines across Western education that is as pronounced in seminaries as in any other corner of the academy.

I will not rehearse the intellectual history of Euro-American higher education but rather simply put forth that, generally, the more abstract and disembodied the discipline, the more intelligent and sophisticated it is understood to be. Therefore, in seminary education, lofty disciplines such as systematic theology are likely to be given more intellectual credence than applied theological disciplines. Call it Docetic heresy in the midst of an incarnate professional field,¹² or call it simply unfair, this hierarchy of disciplines plays a significant role in the location of field education, and its related courses, in the typical seminary curriculum.

This hierarchy of disciplines recently has been called into question by prominent thinkers in the more abstract—and therefore more respected—seminary fields: ethics and theology. Nicholas Wolterstorff writes,

Over my thirteen years of teaching in a divinity school, I become [sic] increasingly disturbed about the chaotic character of the offerings in what we call *Area IV* and about the second-class status of all those who work in what is called *practical theology*—a term I have studiously avoided in favor of the term “engaged” theology. . . . [T]he second-class status of those who work in so-called practical theology is but the manifestation of a pattern that runs deep and wide in the academy generally . . . there is a distinct pecking order within the faculty: those who use their hands, to speak metaphorically, are judged and treated as inferior to those who use only their heads.¹³

Wolterstorff is not troubled by this so-called pecking order simply out of a hunger for justice. He expresses dismay that the disciplines of classical and engaged¹⁴ theology are separated in such a way that the true understanding of

either is limited by false dichotomies. A false dichotomy between theory and practice ultimately undermines both categories of disciplines.

Presenting similar argumentation, Edward Farley connects problems with the hierarchy of disciplines, abstract over engaged, with teaching in seminary education. In an article titled "Four Pedagogical Mistakes: A *Mea Culpa*," each of the four so-called mistakes Farley names is directly related to disengaging theology from the world of ministry. He calls his first mistake believing that "Theology in its primary meaning is an academic pursuit, a phenomenon of scholarship."¹⁵ Were this true, Farley argues, "to teach theology as an academic field has obsolescence built into it."¹⁶ He names as his second mistaken assumption that "the primary skill of (academic) theology is to apprehend the meaning of written texts."¹⁷ The counterargument to this assumption, writes Farley, is that Christianity was not originally captured in books. Third, Farley calls into question his prior assumption that "Theology's primary problematic concerns the clarification of doctrines rather than the intrinsic idolatrous structure of religion itself."¹⁸ One might argue that the most effective means for exposing religion's inherent idolatry is to place it in conversation with culture through application and experience. Finally, Farley writes, "The idolatry distinctive of religion is the identification of the Holy with any or all of the finite, historical entities necessary for the very existence of the religious community."¹⁹ Taken as a whole, Farley concurs with Wolterstorff that to separate theology from the practice of ministry is both ontologically and pedagogically unsound.

In *Educating Clergy*, one reads a way in which ministry is distinct from other professional disciplines: "[I]n comparison with other forms of professional education [that which is distinctive to theological education] is the necessity of learning to make judgments in reference to some understanding of the presence or leading of God or the dynamics at work in the mystery of human experience in a given situation."²⁰ Even with this significant mark of uniqueness, the hierarchy of disciplines laid out by Wolterstorff and bemoaned by Farley is by no means isolated to professional education for ministry.

Schön proposes a new way of teaching for all professions, characterized by "learning by doing, coaching rather than teaching, and a dialogue of reciprocal reflection-in-action between coach and student."²¹ At the heart of his proposal is a belief that teaching theory and teaching practice are not inherently different. One might argue that the difference between coaching and teaching is this: In teaching, instructors provide theories and ideas and "answers," and then students apply them. In coaching, the experience comes first or concurrently with the teaching. Rather than learning, followed by application or "doing," doing comes first. Students act, while coaches simultaneously engage them in reflective questioning upon what they are doing. This sequence leads to a different kind of teaching, where offering answers from outside the context is only helpful insofar as it spurs students along toward reflection amid practice. Schön goes on to say, "[M]y design for a coherent professional school places a reflective practicum at the center, as a bridge between the worlds of university and practice."²²

Schön is well aware of the barriers to creating such a professional school. Referring to all professional schools, not theological schools in particular, he

states that the most common curriculum design includes a practicum at the last possible moment, not so much as a capstone but “almost as an afterthought.”²³ He writes that the assumption this betrays is that the best way to teach professional disciplines is to immerse the student in theory first, then encourage the student to apply the theory virtually on the student’s way out the door.

Schön argues that the more appropriate location of the practicum is at the center of the curriculum. The underlying assumption guiding that location for practicum would be that adults learn best when they are applying theoretical concepts as soon as they learn them. I would argue that most adult learning theorists would consider this latter assumption to be the more correct of the two perspectives on how adults learn—applying concepts immediately while actually learning the theory, not at the “elbow joint” between formal education and professional service.

Argyris and Schön note that reworking a curriculum in order to place the reflective practicum at the center would be fraught with administrative headaches: How does a school organize credit, requirements, supervision, relationships between supervised experience and course work, selection of students, and defining student responsibility? Argyris and Schön own that the administrative mismatch between the academy and field experience poses difficult questions.

When one gets past administrative challenges, however, Schön expresses optimism that placing the reflective practicum at the center of the experience of the student in a professional school could have a catalytic effect of reform on the whole of the curriculum. He argues that through eliminating the discontinuity between theory and practice, faculty members from across disciplines will find their research to be enlivened and grounded in ways that become self-sustaining.

One could argue that the reflective practicum is often relegated to the outermost reaches of the seminary curriculum for three reasons:

1. The hierarchy of disciplines, abstract over practical, prevents momentum from building toward addressing these problems.
2. To move the reflective practicum to a more central location in a curriculum would pose nettlesome administrative questions and problems.
3. Most seminary faculty members do not know how to teach effectively in the setting or style of a reflective practicum, as they themselves are disengaged from the practice of ministry.

Since stasis is rooted in the first of the above realities, the hierarchy of disciplines, one could argue that a relaxation of that hierarchy would make the subsequent issues less challenging. The recent articles from Wolterstorff and Farley described here suggest just such a loosening. Furthermore, scholarly activity in Practical Theology (most notably, that of Dorothy Bass, Craig Dykstra, and Miroslav Volf) is making new connections between ministry and its underlying theory base. Amy Pauw suggests that the intersecting point between religious beliefs and the practices of people of faith is where we see real theology happen.²⁴ She and other scholars seem to be coming to consensus that the new frontier of theological scholarship is the study of it in action. In a lecture at the 2007 Lilly Theological Research Grants conference, publisher Carey Newman

made it plain to the theologians, ethicists, and Biblical scholars present that publishers are no longer as interested as they once might have been in theological texts with no practical implications for the church and world.²⁵ Among the side effects of this phenomenon—this new wave in theology—will likely be greater credibility for field education and applied theological disciplines.

Stated more plainly, the barriers to a fully-integrated, cross-curricular, central field education course in a seminary's curriculum are falling down. How might leaders, such as directors of field education, take advantage of this moment in a faithful and intelligent manner? Doing so will require confidence and competence; but above all, it will require leadership.

Ministerial leadership in reworking the reflective practicum

Ministerial leadership theory can offer guidance and advice to educators seeking to take advantage of a new day in theological field education. Current thinking about the key leadership competencies for professionals indicates that the best skill we can provide our students is an ability to adapt to a changing world. Samuel Wells calls this "improvisation"²⁶ and Craig Dykstra calls it "the pastoral imagination."²⁷ Schön referred to the same ability to adapt and lead in the midst of a quickly-changing world as "artistry," and his work on the reflective practicum was built upon the idea of preparing professionals to be more like artists than technicians.

In a related manner, those who lead field education programs in seminary education must embrace a new time, using creativity and artistry rather than succumbing to stereotypes that once marginalized experiential education across disciplines. At Andover Newton, I have discovered (both anecdotally and through formal data collection) that the faculty is hungry to become more connected to ministerial experience, and it seeks realistic and attainable means for getting involved in this portion of students' education. They have a hunger, but they need assistance in bridging the gap between their often abstract disciplines and the world of ministry. How can I—how can any field education leader—rework a program in order to feed that hunger and continue to break down the hierarchies that have historically relegated supervised ministry to the peripheries of the curriculum? How can we do so while recognizing the constraints inherent in a faculty whose involvement, by necessity, will be time delimited and not always grounded in significant contextual knowledge?

One useful strategy is what Jones calls "counterweighting," where a leader alters one area of a program or institution and then countervails fallout by throwing attention at continuity. He suggests that, in a time of change, a leader should attend also to preserving tradition so as not to stoke anxiety. In times of stasis, the leader should bring new approaches to traditions, "because too much focus on tradition can be stifling."²⁸ Jones argues that counterweighting is more effective than moving full-steam ahead on change in faith communities; the leader who is always out at the phalanx, rather than with the people, can bring more chaos than growth.

This advice for a minister in a congregation is most relevant to the seminary leader seeking to bring about change: One must balance the preservation

of tradition with bold innovations. The bolder the change, the more important it is to stress the ways in which change is taking place in continuity with an institution's vision or mission. For example, at Andover Newton, counterweighting change in the program I lead means calling forth the heritage of the school as a pioneer in field education, pointing at its original goals and aspirations, and connecting new directions with past practices. This demonstrates respect for tradition at a deep level: it is not the program's component parts, but rather its founding ideals, which deserve the leader's protection.

Cormode adds to the conversation a different way in which a ministerial leader can legitimize a change: isomorphism.²⁹ Put simply, new initiatives become credible when they are made to look like initiatives that have already obtained credibility. By mimicking successful programs, new programs are more easily accepted. Cormode's overarching argument is that all people use mental models for making sense of the world, and ministers must work within those mental models to communicate new ideas.

My predecessors in field education at Andover Newton used isomorphism as a tactic to legitimize supervised ministry as part of the curriculum: They made field education a course that carried credit, they created a classroom component to accompany it, and they put professors at the helm of small groups. Over time, the program lost that isomorphic connection as the curriculum changed, but field education did not: the program began to lose its resemblance to the courses it initially intended to imitate. It has been incumbent upon me, in revising the program, to recapture this creative mimesis that is part of the program's heritage. By mimicking the "credible" curriculum, we seek to reestablish the legitimacy of field education in the eyes of the faculty, administration, and students.

Theory and its usefulness

In this article, I described Schön and Argyris' thinking about the reflective practicum, the place where they propose that learning for the professions takes place. Schön and Argyris argue that, in professional education, students must learn (1) technique, (2) cognitive habits of thinking like a professional, and (3) disciplines of reflective practice. Although they do not deemphasize the importance of the first, they argue that the third area of teaching is becoming more and more important as professionals encounter obstacles and concerns that have not been seen or resolved in the past.

I then described what barriers lay in store for a leader who wishes to put a reflective practicum at the center of a theological school's curriculum, including and especially the hierarchy of disciplines—abstract over practical—that often prevents such change. Considering that this hierarchy appears to be breaking down somewhat on the abstract side of the equation, I argued that leaders in field education can use sound leadership practices (counterweighting, isomorphism) to crack open hierarchies and integrate the reflective practicum into the center of teaching and learning in seminaries.

Once a leader has an understanding of best practices in professional education and some strategies for infiltrating a seminary curriculum with those

practices, much still remains to be done in determining the configuration, content, and pedagogy of a reflective practicum for a particular institution. Before rushing ahead into program design, seminary leaders are always wise to understand the theoretical concepts, like those described here, that can frame and explain the dynamics of their settings.

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ENDNOTES

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11. Ibid., 297.
12. I borrow this juxtaposition between Docetic disembodiment and the fleshly world of pastoral ministry from my colleague Paul Adkins. He uses this expression when teaching students about the importance of ministers being ready to "get their hands dirty."
13. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "To Theologians: From One Who Cares about Theology but is Not One of You" in *Theological Education* 40, no. 2 (2005): 88.
14. Wolterstorff distinguishes engaged and disengaged theology this way: "[T]hese two types of theology are typically in tension with each other: the engaged theologian thinks the other pays too little attention to the needs of the church, follows out too much the devices of his own head and the desires of his own heart; the nonengaged theologian thinks the other is too compliant, and in any case, is merely engaged in the humdrum work of applying what he, the nonengaged theologian, thinks out."
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Young Evangelical Church Planters

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ABSTRACT: The personal characteristics and perceptions of ministry of young, male, evangelical, church planters were explored through the use of the Association's Casebook Stage II and the Church Planter Questionnaire. Among the key goals of the research project was to learn more about who these individuals were, what led them to their current ministry, how they viewed ministry, and how like and unlike they were to a sample of graduating seminarians, most of whom were preparing for congregational ministry in established settings.

Interest in church planting within evangelical circles is a primary topic. A fresh interest and seriousness is evident in the burgeoning literature as well as in the emphasis of many Christian denominations and ancillary organizations devoted to founding new churches. It is in light of that interest and specifically how church planters have been identified that the current research project was begun. It formed the foundation of doctoral level research completed at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in the spring of 2008. While the full project also examines the role and influence of key church planting experts, this article has a more narrow focus. It explores the research and findings about a group of young church planters and how they are like and unlike a larger group of graduating seminarians from three evangelical seminaries of The Association of Theological Schools.

While the current project focused on church planting in the evangelical community, it is clear, as well, that such interest extends to nearly every other Christian tradition in North America. The sheer breadth of such interest, along with the attendant complexity of studying it, prompted the selection of a manageable piece of the larger picture. As a consequence, the overall thrust of the project should be viewed as an important first step toward a scientific exploration of those characteristics, traits, interests, and viewpoints that may define those who are both apt to choose the ministry of church planting and those who, in their final years of graduate study, ought to be encouraged to that ministry. The study, then, is one that other religious traditions can examine, reflect on its importance, and adapt to their particular circumstances.

Church planting in its historical context in evangelical circles, the research design of the current study, key findings, and implications of the research form the four sections of this article.

The historical context

Church growth author, Lyle Schaller, elaborates on the need to start new churches “because the Great Commission has always been (about) the creation of new worshipping communities called . . . churches. Throughout the centuries this has been the most common attempt to obey that directive of Jesus to make disciples from among those who have been living outside the faith.”¹ C. Peter Wagner wrote that “without exception, the growing denominations have been those that stress church planting.”²

Tim Stafford, writing in *Christianity Today*, states:

[T]oday, church planting is the default mode for evangelism. Go to any evangelical denomination, ask them what they are doing to grow, and they will refer you to the church-planting office. I have talked to Southern Baptists, General Conference Baptists, the Evangelical Free Church, the Assemblies of God, the Foursquare Church, the Acts 29 network, and a variety of independent practitioners and observers. I quit going to more because they all said the same thing: “We’re excited and committed to church planting. It’s the cutting edge.”³

For many years, church planter selection was based on a willing heart and a live pulse. With little research on the necessary qualities of successful church planters, churches and denominations often used a singular criterion for a church planter’s selection: a willing volunteer! For some who wanted to serve in a pastoral ministry, it was the ministry option of last resort. The results of such a haphazard selection was a high failure rate coupled with a burned-out church planter and spouse, casualties within the congregation, and dollars wasted.

Allen Thompson underscored the importance of engaging in research that identifies the competencies needed in effective church planters.⁴ Joe Hernandez of the North American Mission Board put it simply: “Effective church planters are special not because they are better than other people, but because they are uniquely gifted.”⁵ Today, most church planting leaders would argue that identifying the right planter is essential to church plant success.⁶ While the argument has been made, the research to date relies heavily on lists of characteristics that researchers, church planters, and church plant leaders have identified as important to this ministry.

The first issue with these lists is how they were generated. The most common approach was to ask those in church planting what was most important to their work. The researchers then summarized the responses and developed lists of essential qualities. There was no independent verification of the importance of any item nor was there any attempt to piece the various lists together. Second, the precise methodology for the generation of the final list from these authors is not transparent. Finally, the resulting lists have been used as templates to select and support potential church planters. If an individual was judged to possess the right mix, then denominational leaders would support that individual in a church plant. The problems with such a procedure are ob-

vious, but because the lists offer a handy way to operate, church plant leaders have used them for several decades.

The current research project sought to explore in a different way the question of essential traits for church planters. Can one use an established research instrument in the field of ministry preparation to explore the personal characteristics and perceptions of ministry for those in church planting? Could such a strategy thereby detect individual characteristics or a pattern of characteristics that would identify potential church planters? Wise stewardship of people and resources requires both careful assessment and the right ministry placement of church planters. It also requires a significant commitment on the part of existing church leaders both in terms of selection as well as personal and financial support.

Research design

This study focused on younger, male, evangelical, lead church planters half of whom were designated by denominational leaders as “especially effective.” The goal was to sharpen the overall design. Those born after 1969 would likely be in their first church plant, males because the typical gender of church planters is male, evangelical because of the impetus for church planting within this Christian tradition, and “lead” church planter, namely, the individual responsible for fostering the church plant. Thus was the basic design for the study constructed.

More than one hundred (N = 113) denominational leaders from evangelical traditions in the United States were contacted and asked to list all their church planters who fit the study design and, from this list, to designate not more than a quarter of whom they considered “especially effective.” The criteria for selecting this subgroup were left to the denominational leaders. They were asked, however, to state the criteria for their selection with the results indicating a balanced weight to both personal qualities and external measures. An individual who exhibited “visionary leadership” and a “gifted preacher/teacher” topped the list for personal traits, while the “church has become self-sustaining” and “number of salvations and baptisms” reflect the second.

Slightly more than a fifth (20.4%) of the leaders responded to the invitation and their responses yielded a total pool of 240 church planters, eighty-eight of whom were designated as “especially effective.” Each of these designees was sent a personal letter, the requisite consent form, the Profiles of Ministry *Casebook Stage II*, and a questionnaire developed by the researcher, the *Church Planter Questionnaire* (CPQ).

The *Casebook Stage II* has been used for the assessment of candidates for ministry in North America for more than thirty years. Assessment and interpretive materials from the original project, begun as the Readiness for Ministry project in 1974, were revised in 1988 and for a second time in 2005. Stage II assessment, designed for those completing their graduate studies, has three components, a casebook, a structured interview, and a field observation form. It was decided to use only the casebook in this research project in order to increase the pool of church planters likely to take the time to complete it. Completing the casebook alone takes between three-and-a-half to four hours.

The *Casebook Stage II* consists of twenty-three cases with 528 responses. The cases, descriptive in nature, consist of a variety of ministry and pastoral scenarios. After reading each case, respondents are asked to rate the degree of likelihood that they would choose each possible response on a five-point Likert scale. The CPQ consists of nine items, eight of them seeking demographic information such as the location of the church plant, age of the church planter when the plant began, number of years the church planter has been serving at his church, and average attendance. The ninth question is linked to the research of Ridley and Thompson, two leaders in the movement, and specifies the personal characteristics of evangelical church planters. The list of eighteen items, a condensation of multiple lists of these researchers and others, was designed to explore whether there was any relationship between these lists and the importance that young church planters would attach to the statements. Focus on the methodology and findings from this effort will form part of a separate article.

The final pool of study participants consisted of forty-six effective church planters, half of whom were designated “especially effective.” The usable response rate was slightly less than one-fifth of those contacted (19.2%).

While the primary pool was the young church planters, a sample of master’s level seminary graduates from three large evangelical seminaries with membership in The Association of Theological Schools was also included in the overall research design. The purpose was to explore the extent to which these seminarians, their personal characteristics and ministry perceptions, were like or unlike those engaged in church planting. These schools included Beeson Divinity School of Samford University, Dallas Theological Seminary, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Each had a class of students completing theological studies and using *Casebook Stage II*. Each school agreed to instruct ATS to release the accumulative casebook data for the academic years 2006 and 2007. The final data set, cleaned of incomplete or overlapping data, was 186.

Research findings

Demographic summary. Nearly all of the church planters were married (91.3%) and nearly three-fifths (59%) served in urban areas. The others ministered in suburban, small town, or rural areas. The study participants served churches in twenty states. On average they planted their churches when they were twenty-nine years old and were thirty-two at the time of this study. They had been serving in their church plants for nearly three years, and their congregations had between eighty and one-hundred members. Slightly more than half (52%) were firstborn children, four-fifths were Caucasian (80%) and nearly three-quarters (72%) were seminary educated. Nearly nine in ten were raised in the Protestant tradition (87%) with most from “conservative” or “evangelical” backgrounds, and they strongly identified themselves as from “quite” to “very” conservative.

Study participants were asked to identify those factors that influenced them to pursue church planting versus other pastoral ministries. This open-

ended question generated 176 separate responses. Further analysis enabled these to be grouped into six principal categories. It is not surprising to see the importance of “call” to this ministry. Nearly every study of seminarians, entering or graduating, as well as studies of ministers and priests, finds the central importance of God’s call in their vocational choice. Responses such as “The Lord made it clear to pursue this,” and “God made it clear to me that church planting was how my call was to be fulfilled” provide some sense of the power of the call.

Nearly half of the responses (48%) focused on the church planter’s opportunity to establish his own vision of the church as well as to reach those who were “lost” or needed to be church (41%). Almost as many, nearly two-fifths (37%), were dissatisfied with existing church paradigms (see Table 1). In each of these there can be seen a movement beyond the established congregational setting to one in which the gospel can be proclaimed to a new group in a new way. Much or little can be made of these responses; nonetheless, it would seem to fit that those who wanted to found a church would likely be restless with the strictures of denominational polity. Wags note, of course, that once a new church is secure in its foundation, it, too, develops its own traditions. There is an important ancillary question, and that is, to what extent is the personal makeup of a church planter likely to press him to move on once the church is rooted? Another way of framing the question is, might it not be in character for a church planter to become restless with the status quo and, if so, what must denominations and local congregations do to continue to support the individual’s ministry?

Table 1 Factors Influencing Choice of Ministry

Category	Number Indicating Response	Percentage of Responses
“Called” by God to church plant	31	67%
Opportunity to establish own vision	22	48%
Desire to reach “lost” people/evangelize	19	41%
Dissatisfaction with existing church paradigms	17	37%
Influence of others	08	17%
Opportunity to lead and preach	06	13%

Church planters and graduating seminarians

Responses to the items in the Profiles of Ministry *Casebook Stage II* yielded twenty-three characteristics judged important to ministry. Ten, more than two-fifths (43.5%), revealed statistically significant differences between young church planters and graduating seminarians (see Tables 2 and 3). Half of the differences were in the Personal Characteristics section of the profile and half were in the Perception of Ministry section. The first section explores a variety of personality traits and characteristics while the second indicates a framework out of which one ministers.

Personal Characteristics. The five statistically significant Personal Characteristics were: “Acknowledgement of Limitations,” “Perceptive Counseling,” “Mutual Family Commitment,” “Ministry Precedence Over Family,” and “Belief in a Provident God.” In this cluster, church planters had three scores that set them apart from graduating seminarians. Their scores indicated that they were more likely to acknowledge their limitations, stronger in the importance they gave to their spouses and children, and less likely to allow ministry to take precedence over family. Graduating seminarians, on the other hand, had higher scores in one-to-one counseling and in their belief in a provident God.

Table 2 Differing Personal Characteristics

Personal Characteristics	Church Planters N = 46	Graduating Seminarians N = 186
	Mean	Mean
Responsible and Caring		
Personal Responsibility	2.88	2.77
Acknowledgement of Limitations	4.55*	4.32
Involvement in Caring	4.05	4.07
Perceptive Counseling	2.79	3.14*
Family Perspective		
Mutual Family Commitment	4.63*	4.35
Ministry Precedence over Family	1.93	2.29*
Personal Faith		
Belief in a Provident God	2.82	3.06*
Potential Negative		
Self-Serving Behavior	2.49	2.48

* Responses significantly differ from one another ($p < .05$)

What might these differences mean? What do they tell us about the young evangelical church planters? Their high score on the “Acknowledgement of Limitations” may simply reflect that in doing ministry, facing a variety of people’s needs and everyday pressures, they experience a greater awareness of their own limitations. They may find it easier to own up to their mistakes including apologizing when appropriate and seeking to make amends. It may also suggest the kind of personality trait that fits well with the special challenges of building a new faithful community. They may not get easily side-tracked by their position or role but rather continue to focus on the primary goal, namely, to bring people to Christ. A similarly high score on Mutual Family Commitment (4.63) emphasizes the importance of family to the church planter. They are a crucial support to his ministry, and without them and in the new challenge of building a church, he could easily fail. The importance of this score is bolstered by their low score on Ministry Precedence Over Family (1.93), one significantly lower than that of the graduating seminarians. Its meaning: they are unlikely to allow the importance of their church building to

overtake the importance of family. One does not logically argue the opposite, namely, that the seminarians are not concerned with their failings, uninterested in the importance of family, or preferring to choose ministry over family. The scores, while significantly different, are nonetheless close and what can be said, then, is that the traits are important for both groups but more critical to the mindset of the young church planter.

The profile of the graduating seminarians in the area of Personal Characteristics shows a stronger emphasis on Perceptive Counseling and Belief in a Provident God. The higher score on this first item may indicate a greater sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others. These students may be good listeners and encourage others and, in fact, be better listeners than the church planters. The higher score on the second characteristic may also indicate an idealized faith on their part. The church planters, however, could well be more in tune with the hard work of church planting, which involves both grit and prayer. They are still guided by their strong belief in their call and in God's role but know, as well, the full impact of the sweat of their brow. Note, however, that both of these scores are in the lower part of the mid-range and should be interpreted as having some importance to both groups, but their placement on the five-point scale attests to their overall valuation. More cautious interpretation of their meaning is the better route.

Perceptions of Ministry. The scores in this area relate to the various approaches individuals have to the work of ministry. The principal headings, historically rooted in both research and conversation, serve as broad categories into which the individual scales are arrayed. There are four broad categories, the fourth being Liturgical-Sacramental Ministry. Scores for the items in this category of the stage II assessment instruments come from the structured interview and the field observation form, hence their absence from this typology.

There were five scores in this area that yielded statistically significant differences between the church planters and graduating evangelical seminarians, namely, "Total Concentration on Congregational Concerns," "Aggressive Political Leadership," "Balanced Approach to World Missions," "Building Congregational Community," and "Sharing Congregational Leadership."

While the five statistically significant scores with one exception, the Balanced Approach to World Missions, were in the mid-range of the Likert Scale (from 2.94 to 3.57), three showed the seminarians with higher scores. Each of them relates to congregational polity: Total Concentration on Congregational Concerns, Building Congregational Community, and Sharing Congregational Leadership. The first of these emphasizes "a belief that the church ought to content itself with making its unique spiritual contribution to community life and not take a corporate stand on social or political issues . . . this attitude is likely based on a theology that suggests the church should view itself as a spiritual community and not a political action group."⁷ A higher score on Building Congregational Community, clearly related to the first scale, suggests a minister who will likely take action to build a strong sense of community within a congregation. Fellowship and developing community are seen as important goals. Finally, Sharing Congregational Leadership supports the notion that a minister considers it important for members of the congregation to be involved in such areas as planning, programming, and ministry to the congregation.

Table 3 Differing Perceptions of Ministry

Perceptions of Ministry	Church Planters N = 46	Graduating Seminarians N = 186
	Mean	Mean
Conversionist Ministry		
Assertive Individual Evangelism	4.26	4.13
Precedence of Evangelistic Goals	3.31	3.21
Total Concentration on Congregational Concerns	2.54	2.94*
Law Orientation to Ethical Issues	3.15	3.04
Theologically-Oriented Counseling	3.77	3.71
Social Justice Ministry		
Aggressive Political Leadership	3.67*	3.29
Active Concern for the Oppressed	3.01	2.98
Interest in New Ideas	3.32	3.43
Community and Congregational Ministry		
Pastoral Service to All	3.73	3.78
Relating Well to Youth	3.35	3.30
Encouragement of World Missions	3.98	3.90
Balanced Approach to World Missions	4.41*	4.13
Building Congregational Community	3.20	3.57*
Conflict Utilization	3.56	3.47
Sharing Congregational Leadership	3.16	3.41*

* Responses significantly differ from one another ($p < .05$)

Lest too much be made of the differences, remember that the scores are in the mid-range of the respondents in importance. Nonetheless, they do point to possible characterological differences or differences in an approach to ministry. Tested by the reality of planting a church, the young church planters may see farther than the local congregation, are potentially interested in the broader community, and know, at least at the outset, that much of the success of the church plant depends on them and their core staff. Many of the seminary graduates, not far different in age from the church planters, are more likely to be in established congregational settings with their own history and life. As a consequence, such concerns as exhibited by them and directed toward congregational unity are in order.

The two areas in which the church planters showed the more significant interest were also the highest scores in this set of five significant differences, Aggressive Political Leadership (3.67) and Balanced Approach to World Missions (4.41).

Aggressive Political Leadership measures "a willingness both to be involved in political activity and to encourage members of the congregation to become responsibly involved in the political process. Political activity is seen as one way a minister can put faith into action, represent Christ's love to people, and take a meaningful stand in the community."⁸ Church planters are especially in tune with their surroundings, the reality of life, and work in

the community in which they are building a church. This sensitivity would seem naturally to move them to engagement in the community because their success, in part, depends on attracting individuals within the area in which they minister. Allied to that notion, it would seem that a Balanced Approach of World Missions would be an excellent fit. The social, material, physical, and spiritual needs of the people whom they hope to attract to their budding congregation would be uppermost in their thinking and, consequently, they would be more likely to emphasize every aspect of a person's condition and not a single one. The graduating seminarians, too, are attuned to the importance of this measure, but it is the young church planter who values this characteristic more highly.

Church planters, "effective" and "especially effective"

Were there important differences between those who were identified as "effective" church planters and the special subgroup, "especially effective"? There was only one significant difference as measured by the *ATS Casebook Stage II*, namely in the Precedence of Evangelistic Goals. Those identified as "especially effective" scored significantly higher (3.51 vs 3.10) than the other group of church planters. This too is intriguing; however, it is but one area of difference. It would not seem surprising that these church planters tend toward a greater emphasis on evangelism. They tend to be driven and gifted in the ability and desire to share the gospel with others. Then, too, their very selection by church plant leaders who highly value the importance of gospel proclamation might itself have "ordained" this higher score.

Conclusions and implications of the research

The most robust mean scores evident in this study, those 4.50 and higher, reveal important character traits of the sample of young, male, evangelical, lead church planters. They are likely to acknowledge their limitations and find real solace and support from their family members. Paired with this is the likelihood that they would not consciously allow the pressures of ministry to overshadow the bonds of family. Nearly as strong as these traits (4.41) is their approach to the broad mission of the church. They see it as engaging the broader and inclusive ministries of the church . . . evangelizing, preaching, teaching, encouraging, and supporting. In each of these areas they had higher, statistically significant scores.

On the other hand, the ministry of the graduating seminarians seems more focused on existing congregations. More than their brothers in church planting, they have a sharper focus on the concerns of the congregation, on building it, and on sharing congregational leadership. Each is laudable, to be certain, but their choice of these seems to set them apart from those whose goal is to plant a church.

It seems clear that the twenty-three character and ministry perception scales of *Casebook Stage II* provide a useful exploration of the larger questions surrounding evangelical church planters. Who are they? Are they different from others and, if so, in what ways? Are those who choose this ministry dif-

ferent from those who choose congregational ministry? The research answered these questions, but by no means is the response a complete one.

This study represents a pioneering effort to measure independently and objectively the personal characteristics and perceptions of ministry of church planters. Previous research of the qualities and competencies essential to church planters has been derived solely from self-reported answers from church leaders responsible for church planting and from the church planters themselves.

The next step is to increase the sample size of evangelical church planters. Significantly increasing the number of research participants and broadening the sample to include groups of church planters from other Christian traditions would strengthen the findings and make them more generalizable to the population of church planters. The evident power and history of The Association of Theological School's Profiles of Ministry program warrants expanding future research to include both the structured *Interview* and the *Field Observation* form from stage II. Should this prove too complex, one could substitute the *Profiles of Ministry Survey*, the 308-item questionnaire that provided the basis for the development of the *Casebook*, the *Interview*, and the *Field Observation* form. Adding either the additional two instruments or the survey would add fifteen measures to the twenty-three found in *Casebook Stage II*.

There is a third useful project, which is to explore the potential predictive validity of the stage II instruments for those considering the ministry of church planting.

The dialog with those denominational leaders responsible for church planting can be enriched by this research. In effect, it has laid down some objective markers that should stimulate conversation and encourage those whose task it is to identify potential church planters that there are some objective measures that will help them. Thereby it will help build and expand the potential pool of church planters. Most importantly, it will serve the mission of Christ's church.

Hutz H. Hertzberg, a PhD graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, serves as executive pastor of The Moody Church in Chicago. Francis A. Lonsway, director of the ATS Profiles of Ministry program from 1992 to 2005, retired from ATS and accepted an appointment to the graduate faculty in management and leadership of Webster University.

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Distance Hybrid Master of Divinity: A Course-Blended Program Developed by Western Theological Seminary

Meri MacLeod

Western Theological Seminary

(with a concluding summary by Linda Cannell)

ABSTRACT: The complexity and challenges of distance education can seem daunting for many seminary administrators. The following case describes the experience of one seminary at which distance education was shaped to meet the learning outcomes of a Master of Divinity degree. Faculty adoption, student and faculty satisfaction, MDiv learning outcomes, formational assessment, and program quality were areas addressed by faculty and administrators in the creation of a new kind of distance learning program. The paper concludes with lessons learned through the seven-year experience.

Introduction

In 2000 the Reformed Church in America (RCA) urged Western Theological Seminary (WTS) to create a Master of Divinity (MDiv) program for distance learners. Mindful of its mission to serve the RCA as a denominational seminary, WTS's leadership embraced the challenge. Two critical decisions shaped the program: (1) the MDiv offered through distance learning was to be driven by educational factors and not by technology, and (2) the program had to maintain the established outcomes for graduates, including pastoral formation. These outcomes required students to experience regular relational engagement with the faculty and the campus community. Planning and fundraising began in 2001, a program director was hired in 2002, and the first matriculated student cohort began in November 2003. Now, after the first four years of this hybrid degree program, WTS has gained an expanded student body with increased diversity, faculty who appreciate the value and benefit of a blended hybrid model, a high retention rate, and students (and families) who are deeply grateful for the access to an MDiv this program offers and delighted with the high quality of the community and education they have experienced.

Identifying denominational concerns

WTS is one of two seminaries of the RCA and is situated in the small West Michigan community of Holland. In the 1880s it began offering the residential MDiv. Changes in the RCA churches and mission began to suggest that different types of access to theological education would be needed for the twenty-first century. New leadership at the seminary began listening to the urging of denominational leaders who wanted emerging pastoral leaders to remain in ministry while pursuing their MDivs at Western Theological Seminary.

Throughout 2000 WTS faculty and administrators asked pastors and leaders about their needs and how they envisioned the seminary might serve them in the future. They were surprised to hear the urgency of the request for more accessible theological education. They interviewed men and women who were clearly called to ministry but unable to move to an RCA seminary. The denominational leaders identified losses through retirement and the need to equip church planting pastors as significant concerns for the next decade. Finally, they were told how important the context was in the ministerial formation of future pastors. For example, those called to serve a church in San Francisco or New York City found it difficult to be placed in a mentoring church in Holland, Michigan. These concerns were the catalyst for WTS to envision an accessible yet deeply formational distance MDiv.

Hybrid or blended design to meet MDiv outcomes

WTS's commitment was to create a way, through the integration and support of technology, for distance students to receive a comparable theological education to that experienced by residential students. As a result, a hybrid MDiv has been created in which students remain at a distance yet take only four fully online courses throughout their five-year, ninety-six credit MDiv. The program blends both face-to-face and online learning components in each fourteen-week semester. Matriculated students are admitted in a cohort annually. Over the past four years, students and faculty have processed feedback from program and course assessment, peer group facilitator reports, formational assessment, admissions data, and orientation conversations. Faculty are delighted and sometimes surprised at the extent to which their curricular goals are being met.

Blended or hybrid courses and degree programs shift a significant amount of learning to the online medium, thus making it possible to reduce the amount of time in a face-to-face classroom.¹ Blended courses and programs are the primary focus of energy today in the development of distance learning across much of higher education.² They address the persisting problem of student retention in online learning and attend to the desire of the emerging "Net Generation" of students to be connected online without losing completely the face-to-face classroom experience.³ Yet, as faculty get involved in blended courses, they realize they have to learn new teaching skills, and they discover that their new experiences in online courses cause them to redefine the purpose and approach for their face-to-face classroom experiences.

Both undergraduate and graduate programs are experiencing success in achieving learning outcomes through the integration of online and on-campus components.⁴ These emerging programs are changing the way courses are developed by faculty⁵ and altering the way distance programs are conceived.⁶ While research on hybrid or blended degree programs is limited, initial findings suggest that faculty time for teaching a hybrid course is less than for teaching a fully online course.⁷ Further, the preliminary findings suggest that hybrid courses may provide a better format for student learning.⁸ As colleges and universities are developing blended courses, an accompanying

challenge is to understand the nature of an effective design when multiple blended courses are linked in a formal degree program.⁹ As a result, creating a hybrid degree program involves a great deal of “learning-as-you-go,” and it often needs leaders who are adept in higher education administration and innovation.

Throughout the development of the WTS distance learning program, technology supported the educational values and the resulting program design. Program design choices were not determined by what technology could offer but rather by the desired educational and formational outcomes. During the early phase of program development, residential faculty were, not surprisingly, concerned about issues such as the appropriateness of the distance model for pastoral formation, workload expectations and adequate release time, the challenges of relearning how to teach with integrated technology, apprehension about the expected loss of student relationships, and the possibility that WTS would lose residential students. Learning to teach in a new way raised concerns about adequate institutional support. One by one, faculty engaged their concerns with the director as the collaborative work of course development began. Over time, faculty had opportunities to share with one another their growing wisdom from firsthand experience in the design and teaching of a distance hybrid course, and fears gave way to the surprising joy and reward despite the many hours of relearning a craft now requiring technology.

Empowering faculty to succeed

Empowering faculty success involved several elements. First, each faculty member’s attitude toward and experience with technology had to be identified along with general skill level. Second, several classrooms were updated with fixed technology so faculty could try new tools in a familiar environment with predictably high levels of success the first time. Faculty experiences with *reliable* classroom technology were a critical factor in rebuilding positive attitudes toward technology. They could also experiment with the distance course software (ANGEL) at their own pace.¹⁰ They discovered that they could quickly master basic features such as posting their syllabuses, and they found it could assist them with some repetitive and time-consuming administrative duties, such as grading weekly quizzes. Faculty teaching their first courses in the distance program had a full year to experiment with ANGEL, and the remaining faculty had two or three years to learn it at their own pace as they used it for their residential courses.

In 2002 roughly 10 percent of the faculty were identified as early adopters¹¹ of technology and only 10 percent were younger than 40 years of age. Faculty reported few positive experiences with technology and rarely did a professor speak favorably of the technology support given by the institution. Most faculty had old computers, and no classroom had reliably integrated technology. Hardware for faculty was neither standardized nor on a consistent upgrade cycle. Further, there was a strong withholding culture across the seminary regarding technology. This culture left the faculty feeling frustrated, discouraged, and convinced that technology was far too much trouble to work

with. To the faculty's delight, however, a new permission-granting culture has emerged, and they now feel empowered to risk in new ways as they link new technology to learning outcomes.

Third, a new type of blended course design was developed that integrated each professor's goals, learning outcomes, and vision for his or her course. This gave faculty the freedom to shape the course design in a way that matched their outcomes for students, was consistent with technology standards, and maintained a generally consistent format across courses, allowing for a high quality of student support. Standard online course design models typically used by instructional designers and based on the model of software production fit neither the blended courses that WTS was offering nor the higher education culture of the seminary. It is interesting to note that numerous blended degree programs in higher education are not using the common instructional design model for course development and are creating a faculty-oriented model while maintaining quality levels of course consistency. This practice can lead to cost savings in creating new distance programs.

A permeating conviction throughout the design of the program was that technology *supported* the educational goals and values of WTS's MDiv program. Technology options and rich media possibilities did not drive or determine the course design or educational practices. WTS has found repeatedly in its course evaluations that students value interaction with their professors and peers over interaction with advanced rich media. This is consistent with the literature on student satisfaction in distance education.

While most learners, like people in general, have favorite communications technologies, it is rarely technology that determines how our learners feel about their distance learning programs. Whatever the technology used, what determines their satisfaction is the attention they receive from their teachers and from the system they work in to meet their needs . . .¹²

Experiencing a fully blended program design

WTS's distance MDiv program has been a positive experience for faculty and students. One professor in 2002 was convinced that spiritual formation could not be taught at a distance through technology. Today, he is one of the program's most enthusiastic proponents as he has creatively integrated both web-enhanced and face-to-face features in his seminar on spiritual formation. Now in the fifth year of the program, the majority of the faculty are neither apprehensive regarding program quality nor resistant to the program as a whole. They are pleased with the learning that has taken place in their courses, and students report that they learn as well or better in this blended format design when compared to residential classroom programs. These primarily second-career adult students are highly motivated to learn and participate weekly in in-depth dialogue within a course at a level faculty rarely experience in their residential courses. "I'm thrilled by my experience in this program," one second-career student told me. "I was really concerned about whether I could

learn online and if I have a similar experience as if I were on campus. But the combination of online and on campus together in a course makes all the difference. And the collaborative noncompetitive learning community is an absolute highlight of the program!" While faculty support the blended learning design, the work of incorporating this type of program within the seminary remains an administrative challenge. The complexity and administrative challenge of distance programs for a residentially focused campus cannot be underestimated.

The transition into a web-enhanced degree program has not been without its challenges for faculty. Coordinating the work and decisions of a team of people (i.e., program director for pedagogical direction, educational technologist, and professor) in order to create and deliver a course in which students are well supported is a new experience for faculty and most seminaries. Full completion of a course in advance of the start date can be a tough adjustment for faculty who tend to be more spontaneous. Most often, faculty have established the practice of working individually in the creation of their courses, but this practice changes substantially in distance programs where a team is required to assist with the technology components and the support of students. Another challenge is the steep learning curve for faculty who must acquire a new understanding and new roles (pedagogical, social, managerial, and technologic) related to teaching online.¹³

Next generation blended or hybrid programs are primarily distinguished by the incorporation of both online and face-to-face residential components within courses and degree programs. Two-week intensives on campus inserted into the middle of two fourteen-week semesters, plus one fully online course annually, is the pattern WTS has chosen for its blended program design. Students begin their courses online working in a highly collaborative asynchronous learning community where faculty's regular presence allows for a rich learning engagement. After several weeks online, students come to campus to continue their learning in a classroom. They are highly motivated to use the time together on campus for continued dialogue and course discussion. At the end of a two-week intensive, the students return home to conclude their learning online.

In addition to class time, the on-campus intensives incorporate numerous other formational and community-shaping experiences. These include student-led morning prayer followed by breakfast together, a morning break for student-led worship and community fellowship, evenings over dinner in the homes of faculty, occasional evening lectures on topics of special interest to the students, several meetings of their peer group for prayer, mentoring and mutual support facilitated by an ordained clergyperson, special lunches with denominational leaders, a spiritual formation retreat each spring, an intercultural immersion experience, and special seminars offered annually on such topics as sexual abuse and diversity training. New student preparation takes place over a four-stage cycle incorporating both online and on-campus experiences during the first year a student is in the program.

WTS faculty have worked to create a distance MDiv in which online students have many of the same experiences as residential students. After several years, there are encouraging signs as faculty report that the seminary's community and culture are shaping the personal and spiritual formation of the distance students. Through their online and on-campus experiences each year, they develop a strong sense of community, and they speak and write about the way the culture of WTS is shaping their pastoral identity. In addition, the cohort design contributes to the unusually high retention rate (approximately 90%)¹⁴ as students support one another and are in regular contact with one another, especially through the peer groups. Each year the winter intensive concludes with students and faculty gathered in the home of the seminary's president for dinner followed by students sharing their experiences of the program. After listening to the students, one theology professor remarked, "When we were designing the distance program, we really hoped that it would be as good as the residential MDiv. But now it looks like the distance program is even better than we could have imagined."

A technology infused future

Undertaking the development of a distance degree program, whether a blended design or a pure online design, is a long-term investment in the new paradigm of twenty-first century education in which the physical and virtual components are integrated. Students today are connected, whether online or on the phone. Their experience is about mobile computing, collaborative learning, and almost continual social interaction. But most students have no interest in leaving behind the experience of a residential community and face-to-face learning. Leading a seminary into the twenty-first century will inevitably mean engaging the changing nature of learning and the changing characteristics of students in a world infused with technology.¹⁵

The direction of today's technology is toward dynamic interaction—to enhance social engagement through technology wherever people are geographically. While many seminaries may choose not to engage distance degree programs of any design, future residential students will increasingly expect greater and greater integration of dynamic technology in their educational experience.¹⁶ By embarking on the journey of creating a distance blended program, WTS has provided a degree sought after by increasing numbers and has begun to rework its residential programs for the twenty-first century. More than 95 percent of full-time faculty use ANGEL and classroom technology for all their courses. This is a remarkably high rate of adoption and one that will serve WTS well into the future as residential students are attracted to this learning environment.¹⁷

Sustaining blended distance degree programs: Lessons learned

Reflecting on the experience of WTS's distance program and the growing literature in the field of distance education, several recommendations are suggested:

- Plan carefully with special attention to using an organizational systems approach.¹⁸ Distance programs will impact nearly every element of an institution, often requiring change. Draw upon leaders who can assess your institution's degree of readiness regarding technology integration, and support systems, perceptions, and degree of receptivity across the institutional culture. In time, everything begins to change when a seminary embraces a distance program in which students are widely dispersed.¹⁹ Knowing this factor is critical to long-term sustainability and program vitality. Practices and policies taken for granted in a residential world now no longer fit well and inadequately support student learning. Faculty, administrators, and staff involved with distance programs need reeducation into the field of distance higher education. Technology-enriched programs are dynamic and require continual upgrading. In most cases, these lessons are best learned as faculty are involved in designing and developing courses and facilitating the learning of their students.
- Involve leaders with teaching and administrative experience who can provide an informed understanding of the many aspects involved and point to valuable resources. These can include resources in budget management and planning for a technology-infused degree program,²⁰ online and blended learning, course development and assessment (at both course and program level), standards of quality for distance education,²¹ and various means of student support.²²
- Define long-term goals early in the process, whether it is to offer online courses, web-enhanced residential courses, or a full distance degree program. It is apparent that investing in technology-integrated teaching and learning will not be a one-time investment, nor likely a modest investment for some seminaries. Utilizing the investment to reach a new student population seems a strategic consideration. WTS has gained additional tuition revenue that has been vital to ongoing resource investment. However, an institution doesn't undertake distance learning to increase revenues; most often, there are significant costs involved.
- Senior leadership and institutional legitimacy are essential for a sustainable distance degree program. Harnessing adequate resources over the long term of development will be essential. Likely, senior leaders will need to embark on their own learning curve as diligently as faculty. Most day-to-day decisions by academic administrators are currently based on the assumptions and practices of a residential paradigm. Administrators will need to gain a new understanding of the nature of distance programs and what they require for both educational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. For example, a common residential approach to student support is a misfit for a distance program. Activities that foster formation in a distance program will be different, to some degree, from those in a residential program but no less vital to the success of the program. Program assessment will take on a greater importance and challenge myths and models that rely on residential practices. These and numerous other differences will require resources to develop and skilled staff to implement, neither of which may be fully considered or adequately planned for initially. As

reported by Amrein-Beardsley and others,²³ planning for a degree program requires greater attention to the many program pieces—not just courses. This observation has been borne out in Western’s experience.

- Take an educational and strategic approach to technology. The critical commitment underlying success in distance degree programs is to effectively meet educational objectives and student learning outcomes. A congruent program design follows and is then supported by particular technology. Not all technology may be appropriate for the educational objectives of a course or degree program. In addition, WTS determined that faculty adoption was a high value to the long term quality and sustainability of the program. Both of these convictions shaped the approach to course design and technology used. Strategic classroom upgrades and course management software (ANGEL) were chosen based on criteria that were directly linked to faculty adoption. These criteria included ease of use, reliability, degree of support required, amount of maintenance down-time, nature of proprietary restrictions, growth capacity, and annual cost. Faculty now regularly record lectures in a digital format, use weblinks in class, develop collaborative assignments through drop boxes, and capitalize on the learning benefits of threaded discussions in their residential and distance courses. Today there is a regular cycle for upgrading faculty technology, expanded access to the library and web-based databases enhancing faculty research, and an increase in WTS’s visibility and attraction to prospective students.

Concluding observations

As WTS worked to integrate technology for the distance program, it became clear that a critical distinction had to be made between administrative technology and educational technology. The assumptions, practices, and staff skills are many times different for each of these separate professional fields. A successful distance degree program requires the development of educational technology and staffing structures to ensure success for the academic programs. Administrative technology tends to include network systems, software, and hardware for administrative work.

Because faculty adoption was a critical factor, faculty members had to see that student learning in the online medium was comparable to what they perceived in the residential MDiv; they had to be assured of long-term sustainability; and a course design approach had to be created that placed the faculty culture and established practices of course design at the forefront. The director brought an educational approach to consulting with faculty as they began to work with the new rhythm of a course that began online, moved to the campus, and then concluded online. This consultative process included the educational technologist and lasted approximately six to eight months. Voluntary lunch sessions were offered to share lessons learned and to seek assistance with problems. Courses previously taught were open for new faculty to review and meet with the professor who created them to learn one-on-one.

The development of a distance MDiv will likely mean engaging an academic institution in change, perhaps deep change.²⁴ Familiarity with research on change in higher education can offer insights about long-term challenges as academic leaders attempt to work with “institutional policies and governance structures that aren’t conducive to implementing change.”²⁵ Calculating the capacity people have for coping with change and for acquiring new skills while creating entirely new approaches for supporting students and faculty, new feedback and assessment systems, and new modes of pastoral formation will be a critical factor in program sustainability. Balancing the pace of program development and resource investment while establishing clear deadlines and goals that keep people moving forward is an art not easily achieved but essential for sustainability. It has been important for WTS to be realistic in the work of creating courses for a hybrid format while also having course timelines with deadlines. Courses have been scheduled well in advance, and faculty know when they can expect to take the plunge into distance teaching.

A temptation may be to place energy (and resources) primarily with faculty to the neglect of staff development and numerous other program demands. The cumulative impact can be continual high stress levels and a progression of reduced program quality. Leading with the awareness of a systems perspective is critical for implementing new distance degree programs.

Academic leaders encounter a delicate balancing act between defending academic tradition in its broader context and facilitating the unproven potential of adopting and assimilating new innovations, ideas, and practices into the academic culture. . . . This dilemma has been, and will continue to be, the most fundamental reason change is so difficult for most universities at the departmental, college, and institutional levels.²⁶

WTS was able to capitalize on the new interest and demands of a distance degree program for broader institutional impact such as expanded discussions on student learning, the nature of pastoral formation, and outcomes assessment effectiveness. The changes required for distance education stimulated WTS’s faculty to explore student learning at a deeper level. One New Testament professor shared with faculty after teaching his first distance course:

For the first time in all my years of teaching I really had to stop and think about student learning. How did I know if they were really learning? I couldn’t see their responses in class. This has forced me to read and think about learning for the first time in my teaching career. My residential courses will never be the same again!

During course development, faculty received new materials to review on the nature of student learning, learning online, and collaborative learning.²⁷ The distance program also stimulated an opportunity to create a new assessment

process for identifying the development of pastoral formation across the program. Twice each year, students write a reflection paper in which they respond to one of four different questions related to the development of their pastoral formation. Review of these papers over four years has identified encouraging growth in students' pastoral formation.

The integration of technology in new learning opportunities marks the rapidly emerging future of higher education. "The technological revolution has transformed every major social institution in our culture."²⁸ Similarly, every facet of formal education is experiencing these deep changes. The impact for theological education is both challenging and costly, suggesting that a new era of partnerships and forms of collaboration may soon be upon us in order to manage the increasing demands of technology and to be prepared for the way the Net Generation learns.

Meri MacLeod is associate professor of educational leadership and director of the distance learning MDiv program at Western Theological Seminary. Previous to her appointment at Western, she was a dean at a Christian liberal arts university.

Reflections on the “Next Generation” in Distance Learning in Theological Education

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Meri MacLeod’s article reflects her experience as both a teacher and an administrator. The article’s value is in the lessons learned from considered, competent, hands-on involvement in the planning and implementation of a program in distance education. MacLeod offers insight from what she and her team have learned about the specific support needs of faculty and students and the administrative details necessary for effectiveness. The sort of planning and intensive support MacLeod and her team demonstrate is becoming more common among those seminaries that are taking next generation distance learning seriously. In my judgment, the elements that give this program and others their next generation character are as follows:

1. WTS determined *before* hiring a director that the program would reflect the seminary’s values. These values included the importance of service and personal, pastoral, and spiritual development in a relational community.
2. A competent *educator* was hired as director to ensure that the program would be driven by educational values and process and not simply by technology. In this case, the director, Meri MacLeod, has a PhD in education, managed a \$5 million nontraditional adult program, and taught for seven years at the extension campus of a major seminary in the United States. She understands the nature of teaching and learning and, just as importantly, understands assessment for *learning*. It was important to WTS that the program be educationally rather than technologically driven.
3. To avoid the “step-child” syndrome, the faculty designed the distance learning MDiv as part of the regular academic program, staffed by regular faculty supplemented with guest faculty. When participants are on campus, they are there at the same time as the residential students, thus reinforcing the fact that the distance learning MDiv is part of the whole.
4. MacLeod and her team work tirelessly to build the supports needed by faculty. The day-by-day effort to foster a “learning community of faculty” is central to this support. The best “training” is informal, peer-to-peer, and suited to the faculty member’s level of experience. Most faculty members voluntarily share their experiences and best practices for course development with one another.
5. Two of the more frustrating elements in the design of online learning are addressed: The technologists commit to having the necessary resources available and working. Then, when a faculty member is ready to be creative and move to another level, the team is ready with support.
6. Student feedback on “what they love and what they hate” is elicited and taken seriously in planning.

7. Because the program is educationally driven, the faculty are adding ideas to their personal repertoire that will increase student engagement in higher order learning. Adult participants are expected to assume responsibility for their own learning.
8. Next generation distance learning programs are typically “blended” programs. At WTS, however, the program participants don’t just come to campus for a week or more of face-to-face class time. They are oriented to the campus, to their colleagues, and to the faculty at the beginning of the program—their accommodations and initial experiences of professional quality. Participants are involved in a spiritual formation retreat, professional development seminars, and six semesters of supervised ministry. Because the program is intentionally diverse, all participants receive sexual harassment and racial awareness training to deal with blind spots and to nurture a community that takes “respect of the other” seriously.
9. The participants are treated in every way as *adult* learners. Throughout their program, participants are involved in different types of cohort activities with or without a faculty presence. Even the more skeptical affirm that the community works.

Through the work of its director, Meri MacLeod, her team and faculty, the distance learning MDiv program is reaching adult professionals who otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity to pursue a ministry degree. Distance learning programs are known for high drop-out rates. The drop-out rate in the WTS distance learning MDiv program is remarkably low, and participant response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Linda Cannell is dean of academic life at North Park Theological Seminary and director of the CanDoSpirit Network, an international community of Christian leaders.

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Theological Education in a Multicultural Environment: Empowerment or Disempowerment?

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ABSTRACT: An empirical study was conducted at Fuller Theological Seminary to address pedagogy and campus climate issues related to educating a culturally diverse body of students. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Survey results with 298 full-time students indicated that pedagogical concerns, while important, may be secondary to those of campus racial climate. Focus groups indicated that empowering a diverse population of students may first require attention to the ways in which the seminary environment is experienced as dis-empowering.

The student body of the contemporary North American seminary is more ethnically and culturally diverse than the one of the previous century. Only forty years ago, it was relatively rare to find students of nonwhite backgrounds enrolled. In 1969, for example, racial/ethnic students comprised only 2.7 percent of the total enrollment of all ATS member schools. Three decades later, in 1999, this number had increased to 19.9 percent.¹

Although the head count at ATS institutions has grown by 6.4 percent from 2002 to 2006, the percentage of racial/ethnic students seems to have remained relatively stable. Exact figures cannot be obtained, because students are not required to report their ethnicity. In fact, the number of students who declined to report their ethnic background increased over that four-year period from 8.0 percent to 11.8 percent. Students who identified themselves as Asian, Black, Hispanic, or Native American comprised 20.9 percent of the total head count enrollment in 2002 (or 22.7% of those who reported their ethnicity). In 2006, this number was 21.1 percent (or 24.0% of those reporting ethnicity) and in 2007, 22.6 percent. Thus, since at least 1999, roughly one in five students enrolled at ATS schools has been a person of color.² Given the number of students who declined to report their ethnicity, the percentage is probably higher.

This is particularly the case at Fuller Theological Seminary, located in the ethnically and culturally diverse Los Angeles basin. Enrollment data from the fall quarter of 2007 (excluding Doctor of Ministry programs) show that students who identified themselves as Asian, Black, Hispanic, or Native American comprised 34.8 percent of all new and returning students (or 44.1% of those who declared their ethnicity), a percentage which, if accurate, is more in line with national population figures.³ Asian students by themselves, in fact, comprise nearly one-fourth of the student body at Fuller, roughly four times the proportion for ATS schools as a whole.⁴

But statistical diversity is no guarantor of what we might call *normative diversity*, in which the recognition of the presence of varying cultures and back-

grounds is allowed to reshape the normative assumptions of an institution. In other words, the numerical presence of students from different backgrounds is a necessary but insufficient condition of an environment that is adequately attuned to that diversity. Educating students who hail from such a broad array of cultures presents both challenges and opportunities.

In response to this recognition, ATS has in recent years sponsored conferences and consultations designed to provide a proactive arena for conversation.⁵ Similarly, at Fuller, an ad hoc Joint Faculty Committee on Multiethnic Concerns (JFCMC) was appointed to address issues of campus diversity. In 2002, under the leadership of Glen Stassen and Juan Martinez, the committee drafted a "Statement on Racial Justice and Intercultural Life."⁶ Through the subsequent adoption of that statement, members of the seminary community pledged to maintain a respectful and supportive multiethnic environment. The ultimate goal has been to create and sustain a learning environment that is welcoming to students of all cultural backgrounds.

How might we reenvision the mission of theological education for a multicultural student body? Drawing upon an article by Charles Foster, the committee adopted the grounding metaphor of *empowerment*.⁷ This was to serve as a communal reminder that the purpose of initiatives related to diversity is not to ferret out racists but to examine the unrecognized ways in which power assumptions embedded in institutional practices and relationships might undermine the educational mission of empowering students for ministry.

Foster argues that seminaries practice *pedagogies of formation*, the implicit and frequently culturally relative strategies of instruction and assessment by which faculty may unknowingly disenfranchise students of differing backgrounds. The assumption is that such strategies "contribute inevitably to the empowered participation of graduates in the leadership of churches and communities."⁸ In other words, it is often uncritically assumed that academic success predicts ministry success, even though graduates are likely to disperse across a dizzyingly wide array of cultural settings. Educators assume they are empowering students to take up their future ministries, but is this in fact the case?

Thus, in 2005 the committee undertook a study titled "Theological Education in a Multicultural Environment," which was generously funded by the Wabash Center. The study explored the extent to which students at Fuller perceived themselves as being empowered for ministry, and to what extent this might be a function of pedagogical strategies or campus climate. The pedagogy question was directed toward discovering potential best practices in instruction and assessment; the climate question examined whether Fuller was indeed the welcoming place it aspired to be.

It should be borne in mind that there are two ways of asking the empowerment question. The first stretches beyond the walls of the seminary and into the future ministries of our graduates: are all students being trained to minister effectively across a variety of cultural settings? To answer this question properly, we would need longitudinal data and a clear sense of what constitutes "effectiveness" from one setting to the next. Such longitudinal data are beyond the scope of this study. Students were asked, however, if they wanted such multicultural training and whether they thought Fuller was succeeding in providing it.

The other way of asking the question pertains to the existing diversity of the student body. Are there certain educational goals that should apply to all students, regardless of background? If so, then are we succeeding equally at these goals across groups? Here, the issue is not whether students learn to serve in diverse contexts outside the seminary but whether diverse students are being adequately and fairly served within the seminary.

The study says more about this second question than the first. In short, we believe the most provocative findings of the study relate to the matter of campus racial climate. We will thus use the concept of *racial microaggression* to argue that empowerment requires recognizing and acknowledging both intentional and unintentional acts that leave some students feeling disempowered.⁹ Racial microaggressions can be defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group.”¹⁰

Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues have identified three types of microaggression. The first, *microassault*, is an intentional act of discrimination, and the type usually thought of when the issue of racism is raised. The other two types, however, *microinsult* and *microinvalidation*, are more subtle, and may be nonverbal, unconscious, and unintentional. An example of the former includes the failure to acknowledge or make eye contact with students of color in the classroom. The latter is characterized by discounting the feelings or experiences of persons of color, as when they are told not to be so sensitive when raising concerns about race.¹¹

We contend that an implicit understanding of racism as microassault is too narrow. Such behaviors do occur, are more visible, and are rightly condemned. But the more subtle forms of microaggression may go unnoticed, even as they contribute to a climate of disempowerment. Thus, a commitment to normative diversity requires more than the identification of overtly aggressive acts of racism; it means taking ethical responsibility for the more subtle ways in which the more privileged members of a community collude in maintaining their advantages.¹²

This article thus attempts to summarize what we think are the major lessons learned from students regarding the relationship of diversity to pedagogy and campus climate. After a brief description of the research method, we will present a series of observations drawn from the results. Those interested in greater methodological or statistical detail are referred to the much lengthier grant report that was submitted to the Wabash Center at the end of the study.¹³

Method

The research proceeded in four stages, beginning in the winter of 2005.

Stage one

Narrative/qualitative responses were sought from a culturally diverse sample of twenty-four Fuller students. Each was given a series of ten open-

ended questions regarding their perceptions of the campus environment and pedagogy. Questionnaires were provided in English, Spanish, and Korean.

Stage two

Their responses were used to design items for a survey instrument for the second stage of the research. A seven-page questionnaire was created to assess whether the experiences of the first group of students could be generalized to the whole student body. The questionnaire included demographic items, together with measures of expectations for and the perceived success of training for multicultural ministry, the quality of the social environment, the appropriateness of various instructional and evaluation practices, and how often diversity was experienced positively or negatively in the classroom. Questionnaires were distributed through classrooms with the permission of the instructors. A total of 883 questionnaires was distributed; 298 were returned (34%).

Statistical analyses included group comparisons. Students were classified by majority (white/Caucasian) vs. racial/ethnic status, country of origin (born in vs. outside the United States), native language (English vs. other), and ethnic self-identification for students born in the United States (white/Caucasian, Black/African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino American). Correlational analyses were also conducted to determine what social environment and classroom variables, if any, appeared to be associated with variables measuring whether Fuller was succeeding in the task of empowerment.¹⁴

Stage three

A preliminary report of the statistical analyses was circulated to six external consultants for their consideration and written response. The members of this panel were sought for their known expertise in issues of cultural diversity.¹⁵

Stage four

Concerned about the under-representation of certain groups in the survey data, the JFCMC also convened Latino, Korean, and African American student focus groups to read and comment on the preliminary report. Groups were facilitated by one alumnus and two doctoral students, the latter two being the second and third authors of this article. The responses from both the external consultants and the student focus groups were incorporated into the final report.

Results and observations

The majority of the students responding to the survey were female (60%). Respondents ranged in age from 22 to 70 years, with a median age of 28. Of the 298 questionnaires returned, 276 (93%) were completed in English; only eleven each were returned in Korean and Spanish. Just slightly more than half of the respondents identified their ethnic/cultural background as "white," "Caucasian," or some similar term. Most of the respondents were also born in the United States (71%) and had English as their native language (76%).

What follows are nine interlocking observations about pedagogy and campus climate culled and integrated from all four stages of the study. Some

observations will pertain to the student body as a whole, and others to differences between groups. In the group comparisons that follow, the abbreviations “USB” and “NUSB” will be used to designate “U.S. born” vs. “non-U.S. born” students respectively. Similarly, “ENL” and “EFL” will distinguish “English native language” from “English foreign language” students.

1. Students wanted multicultural training but weren’t sure they were getting it.

This result relates to the first way of asking the empowerment question. On average, students across all cultural groups agreed that they wanted Fuller to teach them about cultural differences and ways to be more culturally sensitive and self-aware. When asked if Fuller was succeeding in these three areas, however, the ratings were significantly lower. In particular, racial/ethnic students were less likely than majority students to agree that Fuller had taught them to be culturally sensitive or aware of their cultural biases. This raises an important question: is sensitivity training more effective for majority students, or is cultural sensitivity itself framed in such a way that it only applies to how majority students relate to people of color?

2. Some pedagogical strategies were favored across groups.

The second way of asking the empowerment question is to examine whether students are being served equally well across groups. To that end, we examined student ratings of a variety of methods of instruction and evaluation that were being used in Fuller’s classrooms. Of eighteen instructional methods presented in the survey, clear favorites emerged. The item viewed as most helpful by students was “professor applying lecture material to real world issues,” followed by “interaction with professor outside of class,” and “printed lecture outlines/notes.” PowerPoint presentations ranked sixth, while lecturing from lecture notes ranked fifteenth—with one student observing that *reading* from lecture notes was particularly undesirable. It should be noted, however, that on average, all methods were rated as at least “a little helpful.”

3. Cultural differences affected how helpful these pedagogical strategies were perceived to be.

There were no significant differences between groups in how they rated the instructional strategies—with one exception. While all groups appreciated being able to interact with faculty outside of class and found this helpful, majority students and native English-speakers found such interaction *more* helpful than their racial/ethnic and EFL counterparts. The reasons for this difference are unknown. One focus group did note, however, that international and EFL students may be more reluctant to initiate such contact, unless specifically and congruently invited to do so by professors themselves.

4. Across groups, some methods of evaluation were consistently judged to be more accurate than others.

Students were presented with eleven items naming different methods of evaluation, and asked to rate how accurately each one assessed what they had learned. "Term papers that focus on integrating reading assignments" was the method of choice, ranked first by the sample as a whole and by all cultural subgroups. This was preferred to reflection papers, which ranked fifth overall, or research papers, which ranked seventh. Where examinations were concerned, students seemed to prefer essays. Multiple choice exams ranked lower than essay or mixed-format exams for all groups.

5. Cultural differences affected how students preferred to be evaluated.

The method of giving "smaller quizzes spread throughout the quarter" ranked second for the sample as a whole. But while such quizzes were preferred over essay exams by racial/ethnic, NUSB, and EFL students, exactly the opposite was true of white majority, USB, and ENL students, who preferred essays. Similarly, racial/ethnic, NUSB, and EFL students all rated essays as less accurate than did their majority, USB, and ENL counterparts.

Such findings may be explained by differences in language proficiency. Racial/ethnic, NUSB, and EFL students were significantly more likely to agree with both the statement that "Because of my language skills, I am anxious in exams," and "I need extra time for essay questions." The findings suggest that while essay exams may be preferable to multiple choice overall, in a time-limited format, essays also favor students of greater language skill. Not surprisingly, NUSB and EFL students were more likely (than USB or ENL students) to agree with the statement that "Students whose native language is not English should be allowed more time on examinations in courses taught in English."

6. Differences of opinion exist in the student body regarding how well the general social environment of Fuller welcomes diversity.

Students of all groups agreed, on average, that "people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are welcome at Fuller." Yet minority students, NUSB, and EFL students were less likely to agree with this statement than their majority, USB, and ENL counterparts. Similarly, they were also more likely to agree that the academic infrastructure (e.g., library resources and faculty demographics that represent diverse cultures) needed improvement with respect to creating a normatively diverse environment.

7. Racial/ethnic students were more likely to notice instances of racial microaggression on campus, particularly in the classroom.

Racial/ethnic, NUSB, and EFL students were more likely to notice that professors and students were uncomfortable engaging diverse cultural perspectives in the classroom. They were more likely to remember instances of cultural disrespect, as inferred from their responses to items such as, "What minority students said in class was treated with less seriousness or respect," or "Others showed impatience while non-English language students tried to ex-

press themselves." They were also more likely to have noticed when "Majority students shied away from minority students in discussions."

Such tensions were a persistent theme of the stage four focus groups. As suggested by our external consultants, one of the primary questions to be addressed is whether institutional power is vested in ways that disenfranchise certain groups of students, whether knowingly or unknowingly. As one student remarked, "The class curriculum is designed and catered to fill the needs of a Western, white, European North American audience." Others also expressed significant anger and pain: "We are always brushed to the side"; "Many minorities know that no matter how hard they work they will never be considered for the TA position or other positions because they are minorities and they don't look like the professor"; "Fuller uses the term 'diversity' as a marketing tool, and it is an insult and frustrating when people arrive here and find that not only is there no real diversity, but there is no real attempt at attaining diversity."

An egregious example was of an adjunct faculty member who addressed one racial/ethnic group in the course as "you people." The incident was reported to the administration twice, but the students were told that their only option was to endure. Students also noted more subtle behaviors by faculty that they found offensive. Majority and racial/ethnic students were treated differently: faculty made more eye contact with majority students, waited longer for them to respond, and interrupted less often when they did respond. Majority student comments were quoted more often than those of racial/ethnic students. Professors probed majority student answers more thoroughly, and used a tone of voice that conveyed greater interest, as opposed to the more patronizing tone often used with racial/ethnic students.

Some participants reported instances of what Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso have called "spokesperson pressure": racial/ethnic students were "put on the spot" in classroom discussions to represent their own race as if they were experts (in the face of a lack of faculty expertise).¹⁶ Some viewed this as the professor's recognition that multicultural issues were involved—which was seen as preferable to complete denial or ignorance. But as other students noted, this practice "leaves the minority student drained," such that majority students have the more positive and productive experience.

The experience of racial microaggression includes other ways in which students reported feeling excluded or invisible. Some professors gave more credence to the thoughts and opinions of majority students, even when the topic of discussion is cultural diversity. Lectures and required readings were seen as predominantly Eurocentric, and students had to petition to take courses taught by faculty of color. The challenges of being international or EFL students were not recognized or were taken for granted. Due to a lack of financial support, for example, many international students must work full time, which adds to the difficulty of meeting Fuller's academic standard. A related issue is that there are too few bilingual staff in the various offices of the seminary, making it more difficult for EFL students to complete required transactions on campus.

Microaggression, however, is not limited to the treatment of students. Racial/ethnic faculty are disrespected by some majority students, who make fun of their accents or make an issue out of pointing out their typographical errors. Students even note the ways in which racial/ethnic faculty are treated with less respect by the administration and by their majority faculty peers. Racial/ethnic staff members, one group reported, have also had to endure faculty meetings where racial jokes were told, as if racial/ethnic individuals were not present.

Such experiences can leave students feeling unsafe. Racial/ethnic students, for example, have pointed out in class when another student's remark was perceived as offensive. But in the instances reported, the professor did not address the offending comment, and the *racial/ethnic* student was made to apologize. Needless to say, the complainant was left feeling not only abandoned, but potentially "blacklisted." As one group commented, "A repercussion for being vocal creates a culture of silence. If you are vocal, your letters of recommendation will not be as shiny as others', or the TA position that you want won't be available to you. Most racial/ethnic students sit in the back of the class and say very little or nothing to keep from getting trampled." Another student from a different focus group remarked that racial/ethnic students are reluctant to speak up in class because they fear "retribution in the classroom."

Here, it should be noted that student silence may mean different things. Some students wish to speak out but keep silent out of fear. Others may keep silent because they are culturally disinclined to challenge authority or do not trust their ability to express themselves in English. Either way, however, the more general point is that in these situations, students do not perceive the classroom to be a safe place in which to share their thoughts and feelings with others.

But as focus group participants observed, it is not only racial/ethnic students who feel unsafe. Both majority and racial/ethnic students "are afraid to engage in dialogue because they don't want to be perceived as racists." This is exacerbated by the fact that "there is not enough time to work through a conversation to resolution" in the classroom, and professors are seen as being too busy to offer mentoring relationships. Again, the result is the perception that "there is nowhere to have a safe conversation" about issues of race, culture, and diversity.

8. Perceptions of campus climate and multicultural pedagogy were related to how students rated the seminary's success at empowerment.

Four survey questions attempted to measure students' perceptions of how well Fuller was doing at empowering students. The first item assessed relevance: "What I am being taught in my classes is usually relevant to the kind of ministry I anticipate being involved in." An additional set of items asked students to rate their agreement with the statements, "Thus far, my training at Fuller has succeeded in . . . helping me understand the specific ways that cultures differ from one another/teaching me how to be more culturally sensitive/teaching me how to be more critically aware of my own cultural biases." Across the board, students who perceived professors or students to be uncomfortable engaging diverse cultural perspectives in the classroom tended to give lower ratings to all four variables. In other words, students who perceived a

general unease with diversity in the classroom were less likely to agree that their training was relevant to their ministry, or that Fuller was succeeding in teaching cultural differences, cultural sensitivity, or critical self-awareness. Conversely, on the positive side, students who observed instances of multicultural pedagogy (e.g., requiring or referring to works by nonwhite authors, soliciting the input of racial/ethnic students) were more likely to agree that Fuller was succeeding in all four areas.

9. Relationships between climate/pedagogy and empowerment also differed between groups.

When racial/ethnic students observed instances of inappropriate racial humor in the classroom or majority students shying away from racial/ethnic students in the classroom, they tended to disagree that Fuller was teaching them cultural sensitivity. But the same relationship did not hold for majority students: for them, the two variables had little to do with each other. This may be because racial/ethnic students were more likely to notice such incidents in the first place. Similar findings suggest that although students' views of Fuller's effectiveness appeared to be related to their perceptions of the presence or absence of normative diversity, these relationships were not the same across the different cultural groups.

Put differently, where their evaluations of Fuller were concerned, not all students would agree that diversity is an issue. The implication is that institutional movements toward change will not be greeted equally by all—which in itself may be experienced as one more instance of racial microaggression.

Recommendations

As the study suggests, there are two related ways faculty disempower students: by using pedagogical strategies that systematically disadvantage some groups of students and by directly or indirectly engaging in racial microaggression. Several practical recommendations are possible. Having read and discussed the initial report, focus group students made the following suggestions, aimed particularly at empowering students whose native language is not English.

Use handouts to help students follow the lecture, and don't lecture too quickly or in tangents.

It is easy to take for granted that it is the student's responsibility to keep up with the lecture. Yet we also must ask to what extent that assumption disadvantages some students more than others. Handouts are one way to help all students track the logic of the presentation.

Encourage ENL students to share their class notes with EFL or international students.

This often happens spontaneously as friendships are formed, but it is awkward for some students to ask this of others. The instructor can help smooth the process, for example, by asking for volunteers at the outset of the course.

Consider using smaller quizzes spread throughout the quarter as opposed to major and intensive exams.

Having to study for several major exams at the same time is a burden to any student, but it is a much greater burden for EFL students who must digest books and lectures in a second language. Smaller quizzes distribute the workload more evenly and may provide a better chance of success. Similarly, faculty can recognize that essay exams are more difficult for EFL students, particularly when time constraints are imposed, and can consider allowing extra time when appropriate.

Assign students to culturally diverse small groups so they can get to know one another through working together.

Small group projects and discussions can be worthwhile, but their value may be undermined by insensitivity to diversity issues. If students are simply told, "Get into groups," many students turn immediately to their friends, leaving some in the awkward position of outsiders waiting to be invited into an already closed group. Faculty must think through carefully how group formation and interaction should be structured to avoid the experience of exclusion. It may also help to establish clear rules of communication for groups, so that all voices can be heard without the interaction being dominated by a few.

Our external consultants echoed some of the same themes and added recommendations aimed at broader issues. Normative diversity cannot be achieved without the appropriate infrastructure. Library resources therefore need to be increased to include more books representing other cultural perspectives, and such readings need to be incorporated regularly into the curriculum. Serious attention must also be given to increasing the cultural and ethnic diversity of the faculty, which may require recruitment strategies that go beyond normal procedures.

Perhaps most importantly, faculty need to be more aware of how racial microaggression is expressed in the classroom and be prepared to deal with it quickly and decisively when it occurs. This includes being more aware of how faculty members' own behaviors may need reexamination, as seen from the perspective of students of color. Do they, as some students have observed, give more credence or attention to the comments of majority students? Do they show impatience with those who struggle with English?

More subtly, even what faculty members think may be supportive or complimentary behavior can be experienced as disempowering. They may recognize the need for cross-cultural perspectives but be blind to the emotional demands of "spokesperson pressure," that is, of putting some students on the spot to speak for their race. Sue and his colleagues have found that Asian Americans often suffer the "model minority myth," which invalidates their own experience of racism and creates tension with other groups.¹⁷ These are but two examples of the ways in which faculty may fail to understand a student's reality, even when not intending harm.

And how do faculty members respond if students challenge them for racial insensitivity? An immediate defensive reaction is understandable: no one wants to be labeled as racist. At the same time, however, those who are com-

mitted to the goal of empowerment will recognize how defensiveness itself may add to the experience of microinvalidation. Faculty behavior in all these areas and more will set the tone for how the institution's commitment to diversity will be perceived.

Conclusion

For some who have already been deeply involved in thinking about the issues of diversity in campus life, much of the foregoing may seem like an extended exercise in stating the obvious. It is hoped, however, that this study will lend much needed empirical support to policies that encourage normative diversity. Any study, including this one, has its flaws. The response rate, for example, was lower than desired. Comparisons between American ethnic subgroups are not reported here, because the groups themselves were often small, making generalization more hazardous. This was the rationale for doing student focus groups at the end of the study, but this does not in itself answer the question of how well what we heard generalizes to the rest of the student body, or indeed, to other seminaries. This suggests that still more research needs to be done, with multiple methods and different groups of students. Policy decisions need to be empirically informed, even if there is no single and infallible path from research to institutional policy.

There is still much to learn about the practices that best serve theological education in a multicultural environment. Students—again, across all cultural groups—want their seminary experience to prepare them for ministry in ways that are multiculturally informed. The present study suggests some pedagogical strategies that may benefit students across cultures even if such practices do not directly constitute multicultural training. The study also points to the importance of the tone and tenor of the community in embracing the diversity that is already here. Fuller is already host to students from many countries and cultures, and in that sense, is culturally diverse. As our consultants have noted, however, such numeric diversity cannot be an end in itself. There is much to learn if the seminary wishes to move from being a multicultural environment to being a truly multicultural institution that empowers all of its students, staff, and faculty.

As an institution of higher learning, we must continue to ask questions related to pedagogy and evaluation that reflect both views of empowerment. Are intra-curricular learning goals appropriate across all student groups? If the goals are appropriate, are they pursued in ways that do not unintentionally disenfranchise some students? Beyond the degree program, do we know what skills and behaviors will best serve our alumni/ae as they minister in diverse contexts? How is that knowledge to be reflected in the curriculum? And by what criteria would we know we had empowered students for the future?

Our ability to identify and reach appropriate pedagogical goals, however, may be compromised if issues of climate are not appropriately addressed. On the one hand, the results of the survey seem to indicate that Fuller is already succeeding in some ways in the quest to become a more truly multicultural institution. But on the other hand, it remains an open question as to whether these results truly represent all student voices. The focus group discussions

would suggest that this is not the case, and that students who already feel marginalized were not adequately represented.

Even if one were to assume that racial microaggression is the exception in the classroom rather than the rule, a commitment to racial justice means that such behavior must be recognized as unacceptable. In any seminary that wishes to empower its students for ministry, those who hold institutional power must take active responsibility for shaping the classroom and campus into safer environments for people of all cultures.

The reality of our frailty and fallibility means that there will always be a need for further growth and learning, and the process is likely to generate significant discomfort. Consultant Sam Roberts has said it best: "The study raised for me one of the paradoxes that groups are likely to experience as they seek greater levels of racial inclusivity: without self-conscious intentionality, members of different groups are less likely to effect genuine levels of inclusivity. Yet it is precisely the self-conscious intentionality that engenders so much mutual pain and unease between the groups."

The movement toward the developmental goal of being a fully multicultural institution will pose significant challenges, not just for Fuller, but for all ATS schools. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the ongoing conversation that will be needed to encourage and sustain such growth.

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ENDNOTES

1. As reported in the *ATS Diversity in Theological Education* folio, (Pittsburgh, PA: The Association of Theological Schools, 2003) available at <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Documents/DiversityFolio.pdf>.
2. These percentages were calculated from ATS 2007–08 Annual Data Tables, Table 2.12. The raw data are available at <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/Documents/Annual-DataTables/2007–08AnnualDataTables.pdf>. These numbers exclude students who are in North America on visas, many of whom are racial/ethnic students. With the addition of those students, racial/ethnic and visa enrollment reached 33 percent in 2007. See <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/PapersPresentations/Aleshire/Documents/2008/CAOS-GiftsDifferingPPT.pdf>. See also the statistics reported by Sharon Watson Fluker, "Diversity Delayed, Excellence Denied," *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 23, no. 4 (April 6, 2006): 59.
3. Fluker, "Diversity Delayed," 59.
4. Asian students comprised 24.1 percent of all new and returning students at Fuller, and 30.5 percent of those who actually declared their ethnicity (21 percent of students declined). The corresponding figures for all ATS schools in 2006 were 6.6 percent and 7.5 percent respectively (2006–07 Annual Data Tables, Table 2.12).

5. Cf. Daniel Aleshire and Marsha Foster Boyd, "ATS Work on Race and Ethnicity," *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002): v–vi.
6. The document may be accessed online at <http://fuller.edu/about-fuller/about-fuller.aspx>. Follow the appropriate link under the heading "Institutional Commitments."
7. Charles Foster, "Diversity in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002): 23.
8. Ibid.
9. See, for example, Daniel Solórzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *Journal of Negro Education* 69, nos. 1/2 (Washington, DC: Winter/Spring 2000): 60–73. We are grateful to colleague Cynthia Eriksson for directing us to this construct.
10. Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, Gina C. Torino, Jennifer M. Bucceri, Aisha M. B. Holder, Kevin L. Nadal, and Marta Esquilin, "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," *American Psychologist* 62, no. 4 (May/June 2007): 273.
11. Ibid., 274–275.
12. Cf. Nancy Ramsay, "Navigating Racial Difference as a White Pastoral Theologian," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 12, no. 2 (November 2002): 11–27.
13. A copy of the detailed report submitted to the Wabash Center can be accessed online at <http://fuller.edu/about-fuller/about-fuller.aspx>. Follow the appropriate link under the heading "Institutional Commitments."
14. Findings reported in this article are statistically significant at $p < .01$.
15. The consultants, in alphabetical order, were: Terry Anderson, Vancouver School of Theology; Miguel De La Torre, Iliff School of Theology; Nancy Ramsay, Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University; Samuel Roberts, Union Theological Seminary; Darryl Trimiew, Medgar Evers College; and Eui-Young Yu, California State University, Los Angeles.
16. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso, "Critical Race Theory," 69.
17. Derald Wing Sue, Jennifer M. Bucceri, Annie I. Lin, Kevin L. Nadal, and Gina C. Torino, "Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2007): 72–81.

DB 4100: The God of Jesus Christ— A Case Study for a Missional Systematic Theology

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This article explores the ways that the standard course on the Trinity can be taught from a missional perspective. The course is first situated in the context of the curriculum of Catholic Theological Union, which holds mission and interculturality at its center. It is then described as itself a missionary act, the content and method of which focuses on practical theology, intercultural readings, and a focus on the Holy Spirit and missional nature of the Trinity.

Introduction

I will never forget the interview I had with Bob Schreiter several weeks after I began teaching at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago. The year was 1986, and Schreiter was serving in his last year as dean. He told me that one of the reasons I had been hired was my cross-cultural missionary experience in the Philippines, and because of that, he would like to see me develop my teaching and writing in systematic theology in the direction of mission theology.

In this regard, Schreiter himself had set the pattern, having developed at CTU as a theologian who was taking cross-cultural and missiological thinking very seriously as he taught courses in Christology and theological method. His challenge to me that morning in his office was to do the same.

I am trained in systematic theology and still see myself as a systematic theologian, but I do theology from a definite *missiological* perspective, developing into a *mission* or *missional* systematic theologian. The following is a case study in doing theology missiologically and describes how I teach a course that traditionally has been listed as an offering in systematic theology. The information is under ongoing development; however, it provides ideas to those who teach and study mission and to those who are attempting to teach and write theology from a missiological perspective.

Context: The CTU curriculum

During the 2002–03 academic year, our faculty was faced with a momentous decision: Should we continue using the quarter system calendar year that was being used by the University of Chicago, or should we change to the semester system as had the two schools to which we had the closest ties, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and McCormick Theological Seminary. After some discussion, we rather grudgingly decided to change, and at the same time we decided to review and, if necessary, revise our curriculum.

Goals for the curriculum revision included designing a curriculum that could more easily develop theological and pastoral integration for our students, one that was more consciously interdisciplinary, and one that integrated mission into all its parts.

The curriculum we developed has at its core four principles: ministerial identity, a focus on *doing* theology rather than just knowing answers, a recognition of the contextual and interreligious nature of ministry and theology, and a knowledge and love of the Christian tradition.¹ With these four principles we developed four *foundational core* courses that all incoming MDiv students would be required to take, each of which would be team taught so as to model the interdisciplinary and integrating nature of theology. They are named Pastoral Practice (P), The Art of Theology (A), Religion in Context (R), and Tradition: Sources through History (T). These broad foundational surveys are complemented with four *complementary core* courses that present a more focused perspective from each of the foundational areas. Students have a choice of these in the first three areas (e.g., Communication Skills for Ministry in the P area), but they are required to take Introduction to Biblical Studies in the T area.

A third *core* of the curriculum is called the *integrating core*, and while the missional nature of theology is somewhat evident in the first two cores (e.g., in the history of ministry, in religion in context, and in the history of the church's tradition), it is very explicit here. The themes of the four integrating core courses are built around the six elements of mission that my colleague Eleanor Doidge and I had developed and that Roger Schroeder and I speak about in our book *Constants in Context*: (1) Witness and Proclamation; (2) Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation and Reconciliation; (3) Inculturation and Interreligious Dialogue; and (4) Liturgy, Prayer, and Contemplation.² In addition, each of these courses is to be taught from the four basic principles—P, A, R, and T. The course on God about which I will reflect is titled Witness and Proclamation: The God of Jesus Christ.

The rest of the curriculum is pretty standard. There are two ministry practicum courses, the first of which is connected with a weekly group theological reflection. There are a number of area requirements in Bible (e.g., systematic theology, ethics, spirituality, and canon law). And finally there are six electives that students can use to fulfill a particular concentration (e.g., world mission, cross-cultural ministry, Bible, liturgy) or simply to take courses in disciplines that particularly interest them. This is all “capped off” with a one-credit *integrating core* course that students take toward the end of their program.

Perhaps the following outline of the curriculum would be helpful:

Foundational Core Courses

- Pastoral Practice: Theology of Ministry (P)
- Art of Theology: Theological Method (A)
- Religion in Context: Diversity in Dialogue (R)
- Tradition: Sources Through History (T)

Complementary Core Courses

Course that focuses on Ministry (P) (e.g., Communication Skills for Ministry)

Course that focuses on Method (A) (e.g., Doing Systematic Theology)

Course that focuses on Context (R) (e.g., Abraham's Children)

Introduction to Biblical Studies (T)

Integrating Core Courses (Each course integrates P-A-R-T around themes focused on the church's mission)

Witness and Proclamation: The God of Jesus Christ

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation: Living the Values of the Reign of God

Inculturation and Dialogue: Ministry on the Margins

Liturgy, Prayer, and Contemplation: Ecclesial Spirituality

Ministry Practica

One-year placement in a ministry site, with weekly theological reflection

Three-week exposure in a cross-cultural situation

Area Requirements

Courses in Bible, systematic theology, ethics, spirituality, liturgy, history, canon law

Electives

Six courses of student's own choosing

Integrating Core Course

This is the broader context in which I teach the course DB 4100:

Witness and Proclamation: The God of Jesus Christ.

DB 4100 as a missionary act

In my own philosophy of teaching theology, I believe that every course I teach is a "missionary act" or an act of evangelization. To quote one of my colleagues from a conversation about teaching that we had as a faculty some years ago, my goal in teaching is to "make my students virtuous," to share with them my love of the tradition and my love and service of God. Teaching this course—Witness and Proclamation: The God of Jesus Christ—is particularly missionary, however, because the material in the course is really at the heart of the gospel. I understand my task in the course as not only communicating a content but also *engaging* in witness and proclamation—and especially the latter.

While the idea of *witness* is quite popular among Catholics and among Catholic missionaries today, the idea of *proclamation* or witnessing in words about one's faith in Jesus and inviting people to conversion is something that they are quite hesitant to do or even approve. A few years ago, Roger Schroeder and I were asked to write a theological reflection on stories that missionaries had submitted to the United States Catholic Mission Association to be

published in a small booklet for one of its conferences. What we noticed was that, among all these wonderful stories from dedicated women and men serving around the world—some in very difficult situations—there was little if any mention of actual proclamation of the gospel to the people among whom they served.³ In his marvelous apostolic exhortation on evangelization titled *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI insisted on the importance of witness: “Above all,” he wrote, “the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.”⁴ He went on to insist, however, on explicit proclamation: “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.”⁵ Most Catholics today, I believe in contrast, would be happier with the phrase attributed to Francis of Assisi: “preach always; if necessary use words.”

The reason for this hesitation is certainly, in part, a sensitivity on the part of Christians to respect the religious freedom of peoples of other religions and convictions. However, many of these same people are quite public and strong about proclaiming their own convictions about issues of social justice such as ecological responsibility, the death penalty, and human rights. What I have come to suspect, however, is that such reticence about explicit proclamation of the gospel message is that many Catholic Christians *do not actually like the God they believe in*. Often the God that Christians believe in is imagined deep down not as a God of overflowing compassion and love, but one who is demanding, easily angered, judging, and legalistic.

What Christians in general and my students in particular often need is to be evangelized themselves. They need to be exposed to the true God, the God of Jesus Christ, the God revealed in Jesus’s parables of mercy and challenge, in His compassionate healings and liberating exorcisms, in His inclusive lifestyle, in His commitment to preach and witness even though these lead to death, and in His movement through death through the power of God’s Spirit.

So the goal in this course on the God of Jesus Christ is to expose my students to the power of the gospel. I begin the course with a class titled “The Idols We Carve.” I read to them the great passage in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* in which the main character Celie discovers that God is not necessarily a *man* and is not necessarily *white*. I show a *Far Side* cartoon that depicts “God at His Computer” just about to push the “smite” button as an innocent man walks beneath a piano. I project a slide of an ad that proclaims that in the time it takes to read the ad, a dozen Muslims will die and go to hell, and I read from Mark Twain’s chilling short story “The War Prayer” about the other side of our prayers for the victory of our armies. What is amazing is how many students feel freed by the exposure of these and other “idols” they have carved in their lives. They recognize their captivity to them and begin the struggle to open up to the Christian God.

This is what the rest of the course tries to lead the students to discover. So a first step in teaching missionally is doing mission myself. We reflect on the pervasive presence in the Spirit, loose in the world; on Jesus’s ministry and death and resurrection; on God’s mystery, incomprehensibility, and ineffability as matrix and Father; on the mystery of the Trinity into whose life and mission we are baptized; on God’s power expressed in weakness, vulnerability,

and companionship in suffering. I'm sure that many teachers of theology know the great privilege of doing this in their various disciplines. It's certainly what keeps me teaching and working to teach better and better through the years.

But evangelization does not end with conversion. As Pope Paul wrote: "It is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in turn."⁶ And so the course also attempts to show how the God of Jesus Christ is a missionary God, faith in whom immerses women and men into God's own missionary life.

DB 4100 as missional theology

In June of 2001, I had the great privilege of addressing a plenary session of the Catholic Theological Society of America. In my presentation titled "Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theology and the Missiological Imagination,"⁷ I spoke of the need of systematic theology in general, if it is to reflect a missionary perspective, to use the method of practical theology—moving from concrete experience through theory to a more reasoned practice; to "listen to all the voices" by widening the sources with which the dialogue of theology is entered into; and to engage in the process of inculturation through a dialogue with one's own cultural, political, and social context. I also sketched in that address the broad outlines of a missiological reflection on the doctrine of God that emphasized God's missionary, trinitarian nature; that develops the doctrine of God through a real encounter with other religious traditions; that emphasizes the "priority" of the Holy Spirit; and that reinterprets the divine perfections (immutability, omnipotence, impassability) in terms of relationality and vulnerability.

All these elements are present in the way I teach The God of Jesus Christ, and I will illustrate them in what follows in a slightly different order.

Practical theology

I struggle as a systematic theologian with the method of practical theology. Systematic theology has been developed as a theory-theory type discipline rather than the praxis-theory-praxis approach of practical theology. However, there are two ways that I attempt to focus on practical theology in the course. First, my starting point is from the (presumed) experience of the students, which is that they are often tied to idols of God rather than to the true God of Jesus Christ. Second, after every unit of the course, one class is devoted to discussion—in small and large groups—about practical implications of what we've discussed: What does this mean to your spiritual life? How might this impact your concrete ministry? How might you *preach* the material reflected on in class? What I hope is that the academic material discussed in class will not simply remain academic, but that it can and will inform one's Christian life and ministerial practice. Frankly, I hope that the students will fall in love with God and will be eager to share their discovery in every aspect of their ministry.

“Listening to all the voices,” inculturation, interreligious dialogue

I have also tried to “listen to all the voices” and highlight inculturation as we reflect on the Spirit, Jesus, and the Holy Mystery that tradition has called “The Father.” Every week the students must read one article and submit a 150-word summary of their reading. However, that one article is to be chosen from a number of articles that represent a number of cultural and religious viewpoints. (Of course, students are encouraged to read *all* of them.) For the week when we reflect on Jesus’s mission, for example, they have a choice among articles by feminist Elizabeth Johnson, Black theologian James Cone, German Walter Kasper, U.S. Anglo theologian David Tracy, Latin American Ronaldo Muñoz, Filipino José de Mesa and Belgian Lode Wostyn, African Jean-Marc Éla, and British theologian John Ashton. For the week when we reflect on the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity, students have a choice among Johnson; U.S. feminist Catherine LaCugna; Brazilian Leonardo Boff; U.S. Anglos Mark Heim, William Placher, and Richard Rohr; and Korean Jung Young Lee. When I taught the course in the spring semester of 2008, I added books by Nigerian A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya⁸ and by womanist theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher,⁹ which I will also place on my reading list, along with books by Elizabeth Johnson¹⁰ and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen¹¹ that present the Trinity from a number of cultural perspectives.

At the beginning of each class, I spend thirty to forty minutes asking the students to share what they have read that week—what they have learned, what has challenged them, what they still don’t understand. This is a way for the students to teach each other, and a way for me to teach from the students’ questions and insights. Many students struggle with Johnson’s arguments on the relative insignificance of Jesus’s maleness, for example, but get further insight into what Jesus’s humanity really signifies. Or students connect their own cultural understandings to Muñoz’ or Éla’s portrait of Jesus in the context of liberation theology. Again, in discussions on the meaning of the Trinity, students are enriched by Johnson’s and LaCugna’s feminist emphasis on the Trinity’s radical communion as an indictment of any kind of patriarchy or domination, by Boff’s brilliant reflections on the Trinity as an icon of justice, by Lee’s very different approach to the Trinity through the Chinese notion of yin and yang, and by Heim’s insistence that interreligious dialogue is a requirement of Trinitarian faith. These are rich discussions, and students have mentioned both in evaluations and in personal conversation how much they value them.

In addition to these varied readings for each part of the course, I have built in a special section that focuses on the understanding of God in particular cultures and in other religious traditions. These can only be case studies—I’ve brought in African American, Latino/a, and Asian guest lecturers in terms of culture and an Asian lecturer and an Islamic scholar for other religions—but my point is that one cannot really do *Christian* theology today without a sense of rootedness in one’s own culture, dialogue with other cultures, and dialogue with the world’s religions. I think this sensitivity is at the heart of missional systematic theology today.

The Holy Spirit

After the first class on “The Idols We Carve,” I spend a class reflecting on the reality of the Holy Spirit, who as Vatican II says, “was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified.”¹² I try to approach an understanding of the Holy Spirit as the mysterious, undifferentiated presence of God that stirs up questions and deep desires and yearnings in all human beings. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we get a glimpse—though mysterious—of who the God of Jesus Christ is, as we experience the wonder of ourselves, of the cosmos, of creation; or as we experience a hope gleaming in the midst of failure and tragedy in our lives; or as we are assured of life in the face of death. Our God is a God who is always and everywhere present in human and cosmic history, bending over the world as Gerard Manley Hopkins imagined with “ah! bright wings.”¹³

In the next two classes I go on to say that this mysterious presence of the Spirit is made concrete through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The beautiful words of U.S. Catholic feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson have inspired me here: “Christian faith is grounded on the experience that God who is Spirit, at work in the tragic and beautiful world to vivify and renew all creatures through the gracious power of her indwelling, liberating love, is present yet again through the very particular history of one human being, Jesus of Nazareth.”¹⁴ Jesus is the key to who God is. As Juan Luis Segundo so wonderfully says, “God is like Jesus”—that is we don’t have a previous idea of God into which Jesus fits. It is through Jesus’s mission—the way he spoke, cured, lived, died—that we discover who God is.¹⁵

The Trinity

The section of the course that has surprised me the most as I have tried to teach it as missional theology has been the section on “The Meaning of the Trinity.” It is only one class session, but I have begun to realize that it could be developed in several classes—even an entire course. Taking Rahner’s famous dictum as a starting point—“the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice-versa,”¹⁶ I begin my reflections by pointing out that the community and communion with mystery and with creation that the Spirit inspires us to dream and that Jesus exemplifies in his own mission and person (the economic Trinity) points to what God is in God’s self. Reality is not monarchical and solitary. “Christianity’s most transcendent assertion,” writes Brazilian Leonardo Boff, “may well be this: In the beginning is not the solitude of One, but the communion of Three eternal Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the remotest beginning, communion prevails.”¹⁷ God’s missionary task is to invite all of humanity—indeed all of creation—into this communion. This is who God is—as my colleague Tony Gittins once unforgettably put it in a (never published) talk, God is “Love hitting the cosmic fan.”

What I have discovered, and try to get across to my students, are two things here. First, God is more a *verb* than a noun, a movement, an embrace, a dance rather than a mover, a lover, a dancer. The ancient term *perichoresis*, especially in its more dynamic understanding proposed by the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure, denotes movement in the depths of God as such, a

constant “moving around,” “interpenetrating” one another. And, as contemporary theologians have pointed out, the term *perichoresis* lends itself easily to a play on words with the Greek word for “dance.” With this movement or dance God moves into the world. I like to imagine the divine community moving through the world in a great conga line, gathering up people into the dance, led by the “Lord of the Dance.”¹⁸ Second, intimately connected with the first, is that *faith* in this God is to be caught up in that movement, that embracing, that dance—in God’s mission. God is a missionary God, Christians are missionary people, the church is “missionary by its very nature.”¹⁹ It is maybe “pushing the envelope,” but I try to connect the traditional doctrine of *theosis* or *divinization* (a doctrine rather neglected in the West but developed strongly in the East) with this missionary nature of God and Christianity. When we believe in God, we do what God does; and when we do what God does—pour out our lives in love for God and for God’s creation—we, as it were, *become* Divine ourselves, because we are caught up in God’s very life. What this points to in turn is that it is in *mission*, in service, in self-giving, that we ultimately find our salvation, our human wholeness. This is why we witness to and preach the God of Jesus Christ and Jesus himself, and why we invite women and men to join us in faith and in the church.

I have also discovered that faith in the Trinity is precisely what leads us to the process of the inculturation of our faith. Through the Holy Spirit, who pervades all things, and through the Incarnate Word who is immersed in creation and in human flesh, we know that all things are holy, and so anything and everything can be a vehicle for the communication of God’s gospel. Culture, history, experience are the “stuff” of theology, of preaching, of sacraments.²⁰ In the same way, as Mark Heim has pointed out powerfully in his work on the Trinity and interreligious dialogue,²¹ the radical communion of the Trinity, the radical unity-in-diversity that expresses itself in intra-Trinitarian dialogue, is the basis for Christians’ own missionary commitment to dialogue with people of other faiths. The specific doctrine of Christian monotheism points to the fact that it is not only *allowed* but necessary that those who believe in the God of Jesus Christ engage in honest dialogue with all—Christians and non-Christians—who do not share their explicit faith. Finally, as Leonardo Boff has argued,²² Trinitarian faith calls us inevitably to be women and men of social justice. The unity-in-diversity among the persons, the differentiation-in-equality that is the Trinity is actually an icon of what the world could be like if women and men believed authentically in the God of Jesus Christ. Social justice, like inculturation and interreligious dialogue, are not options or extras to Christian faith but are intrinsically bound up with it. As Eastern Orthodox theologians express it, “the Trinity is our social program.”²³

The Trinity is a missionary doctrine. Specific faith in the God of Jesus Christ does not set us apart from the world but engages us with it—with the world’s history, with its cultures, with all of its religions, with the struggle for justice for the world’s poor.

Conclusion

I continue to struggle to teach this course—and all my courses—from a truly missional perspective. Indications are, however, that students are getting the point. They have expressed a deeper awareness of the limited and even harmful images of God from which they struggle to free themselves. They also struggle to imagine God more amply, as mother, as friend, as all-pervasive Spirit, and to realize that the key to understanding God is to more deeply understand the ministry, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Many have expressed how they have been surprised by the richness and practicality of Trinitarian doctrine: as one student put it in class, we are not just trying to understand God but to understand a new way to live. Many, too, have been impressed by the richness of the cultures and faiths that we have studied—albeit only superficially as case studies. Finally, students have said that they feel more convinced of the truth of the God of Jesus Christ, and have been inspired to preach more confidently about the God Jesus revealed.²⁴

Surely I have not discovered everything that can be discovered about the missionary nature of the doctrine of God or of systematic theology. But teaching this course in the context of CTU's new curriculum has been an adventure, an adventure I want to continue to pursue in the years to come.

Stephen Bevans is Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD Professor of Mission and Culture at Catholic Theological Union. One of his primary interests is developing systematic theology in a missional and global perspective.

ENDNOTES

1. These four areas are roughly equivalent to the four primary goals of the Master of Divinity degree: "knowledge of the religious heritage; understanding of the cultural context; growth in spiritual depth and moral integrity; and capacity for ministerial and public leadership." See *Bulletin*, Part 1, Standard A, section A.2 (Pittsburgh, PA: The Association of Theological Schools). Our new curriculum places additional emphasis on theological method and presumes that the personal and spiritual aspects of the program are integrated both into the individual courses and within the various formation programs of the various religious communities, lay students, African American students in the Augustus Tolton program, and Latino/a students in the Oscar Romero program. See the CTU catalogue http://www.ctu.edu/sites/ctu.edu/files/Admissions_Files48/07Cat_sgpg_web.pdf, 20–21.
2. Stephen Bevans and Eleanor Doidge "Theological Reflection" in *Reflection and Dialogue: What MISSION Confronts Religious Life in the U.S. Today?* Barbara Kraemer, ed. (Chicago, IL: Center for the Study of Religious Life, 1999–2000). Stephen Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).
3. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, "Trading Stories: A Theological Reflection," Periodic Paper 3, *Mission Update* 9, no. 3 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Mission Association, 2000): 1–5.
4. Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, [On Evangelization in the Modern World] (apostolic exhortation promulgated on Dec. 8, 1975), EN 21.
5. *Ibid.*, EN 22.

6. Ibid., EN 24.
7. Stephen Bevans, "Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theology and the Missiological Imagination" (plenary address, Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America), 21–42.
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11. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).
12. Vatican Council II. Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Missionary Activity of the Church (promulgated by Pope Paul VI on Nov. 18, 1965), AG 4.
13. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," *Poems* (1918), <http://www.bartleby.com/122/7.html>.
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15. Juan Luis Segundo, *Christ in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 1987), 22–26.
16. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 1970), 21–24, 82–103.
17. Leonardo Boff, "Trinity" in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993): 389–420.
18. Stephen Bevans, "Reimagining God and Mission" in *Reimagining God and Mission: Perspectives from Australia*, ed. Ross Langmead (Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press, 2007) 7–11.
19. Vatican Council II. Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Missionary Activity of the Church (promulgated by Pope Paul VI on Nov. 18, 1965), AG 2.
20. Stephen Bevans, "Inculturation and SVD Mission: Theological Foundations," *Verbum SVD* 42, no. 3: 259–281.
21. S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).
22. Boff, "Trinity."
23. Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 403–423.
24. I want to thank my students, especially those in my class in the spring semester of 2008, for reflecting on their learnings from the course.

Theological Education Submission Guidelines

Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, is devoted to the distinctive concerns of graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association by providing those concerned with theological education—including administrators, faculty, and independent researchers—with scholarly discourse and reports on issues and trends, research findings and resources, and models of critical analysis and effective practices in graduate theological education.

Format of the Journal: Theme Focus and Open Forum

The **theme focus** section of the journal contains articles that have been **solicited** by the editors or the editorial board. These articles address current topics and issues in theological education, identified areas of the Association's work, and/or reports of work undertaken by ATS projects.

Unsolicited submissions are generally considered for publication in the **open forum** section. These articles may focus on any of a variety of subjects related to graduate, professional theological education in North America. The open forum may also include articles drawn from presentations at ATS leadership education events and other Association venues in order to make them more widely available.

Submission Guidelines

Theological Education invites submissions of articles that are consistent with the journal's purposes as enumerated in its mission statement. Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by at least two members of the editorial board, who make recommendations to the editors regarding their publication. The editorial board will not consider articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

1. Recommended length of articles is 5,000 words (approximately 18 double-spaced pages).
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. for style and formatting, using one-inch margins, left justification, and endnotes. Convert footnotes to endnotes.
3. Write in the third-person form when possible.
4. If quoting Scripture, include the Bible translation with each reference.
5. The *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* are the references for preferred spellings.
6. Provide a paragraph abstract of approximately 80 words at the beginning of the article.
7. Add a short (2–3 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution or relationship to the project/topic, position held, and/or other information relevant to the experience of the writer(s).
8. Submissions should be emailed to the managing editor, Eliza Smith Brown, at brown@ats.edu.

Responses to prior articles are encouraged and are published at the discretion of the editors. The suggested length for a reader response is 1,500 words; responses may be edited for length.

Author's Checklist

1. Does the article contribute significantly to discourse about theological education?
2. Does the article represent new ideas or experiences that colleagues at other theological schools can incorporate into their teaching or administration?
3. Will the article spark useful debate on the topic?
4. Does the article have a clear focus, and are the arguments well-developed?
5. Does the article make accurate use of the data available from ATS and other sources?
6. Does the article conform to the Submission Guidelines listed above?

